Week ending July 22 1950 Every Thursday Threepence

John Bull

Starting this week—a young explorer's fascinating true-life series:

ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE

by BERNARD STONEHOUSE

★ **TRUE STORIES** from an Insurance Man's Notebook

One against the world

TRAGEDY knocked on Mrs. Archer's door that sunny morning with a grave policeman's hand. Above the pounding of her heart she answered his question, heavy with the burden of bad news.

'Yes', she said, 'I am Mrs. Archer.'

An accident. Her husband . . . she heard the dreaded, unbelievable word . . . dead. The street spun wildly around the policeman's face, suddenly blurred and, distorted. The sun went out.

Behind the closed door she stood rigid, feeling nothing, nothing. There was his best cap on the hall-stand and in the mirror beside it a pale face with frightened eyes. Her own. Mechanically she patted her disordered hair. 'What a sight I look' . . . and her mind was working again.

What to *do*, that was it. What to do first? Who knew all about these things? Life had stopped. Who could help her get it moving again?

Then, as hundreds of thousands of suddenly helpless people have done before and as hundreds of thousands will do in the future, she thought of her insurance man. In this case it was me and within an hour I was with her, helping her to sort out all the immediate problems of bereavement. To us insurance men this trust and confidence of policyholders is what makes our job worth while. To be welcomed almost as one of the family, depended upon for help and advice in all kinds of personal problems, often far removed from insurance, is part of a long tradition of public service of which we and our Offices are very proud.

Her name is not actually Mrs. Archer and, to protect her privacy, this is not her photograph, but the story is her story, one of many on the confidential files of one of these Insurance Offices, which have spread the benefits of insurance throughout the community.

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EDITORIAL

As holidays begin, remember the schoolteachers

THE SCHOOLS ARE breaking up for the holidays—but the Minister of Education, George Tomlinson, is left behind to grapple with their problems.

He knows that there will be more children entering school in September than are breaking up this month.

He knows that the number is likely to go on increasing term by term. And he knows that far too many classes are too large, and that he has not enough training colleges to produce the teachers needed—even if recruits were pressing forward on the present unattractive terms.

These are conditions in which efficient education becomes impossible. The strain on the teacher of examining the work and correcting the exercises of a class forty to fifty strong is exhausting. When to this is added supervision of school meals and other non-scholastic duties, a teacher's life is far from a happy one.

Yet the teacher—the ordinary, unhonoured and unsung teacher—is the mainspring of all education. On his or her personality, competence, energy and cheerfulness depend the school careers and therefore much of the future success in life of all the children who pass through the class.

By 1954, if the worst examples of oversize classes are to be abolished and the greater numbers of children absorbed, this country will need 89,000 men teachers and 151,000 women—an increase of 11,000 and 18,000.

It is likely that the minimum number of men teachers will be attained. It is not likely that there will be enough women—unless training facilities are greatly increased.

But of women teachers there is *now* a grave shortage. It is not being overtaken, although both the emergency training scheme started after the war and the system of controlling distribution of teachers among local authorities are being kept going much longer than was envisaged.

UNFORTUNATELY the shortage is not so much among general teachers as among the more expert and specialized ones—for example, teachers of science and mathematics.

These "hard" and uncompromising subjects, demanding special knowledge and training, are so understaffed that the standard attained by the pupils is below that of prewar.

Girls' schools find it especially difficult to fill these posts.

"If their difficulties persist," comments the Ministry of Education in its annual report, "the result will be particularly disturbing, because the needs of the schools will become greater as the larger age groups of children born in 1945-48 move into the secondary schools, and as more pupils remain in the secondary schools after the age of sixteen."

Many more training colleges are essential. So are prospects of better pay and conditions to attract recruits.

Here there are alarming signs of complacency in high quarters.

For instance, the Ministry of Education says: "As more girls stay on at secondary schools, *there should be no difficulty* in finding recruits for an increasing number of training college places."

But the authors of this optimistic observation are deluding themselves if they think they will ever get enough of the right recruits without first doing something about the economic situation of teachers.

TODAY the profession is simply not attractive enough to compete for good brains and strong personalities with industry—let alone with the better-paid professions which enjoy greater social glory.

The pay is frankly poor. It has not risen comparably with wages elsewhere. Negotiations are now going on for a revision of the Burnham Scale which regulates the pay of all teachers in public employment. The teachers ask for an all-round rise of £150 a year. They certainly need and deserve it.

But there is good reason to believe that the figure of £150 has been put forward merely as a bargaining one—not because there is any real hope of getting it. Some local authorities are known to be unwilling to pay even half—£75 extra a year. They don't want to increase their rate.

The alternative is bigger Government grants. It is, however, unlikely that the Chancellor would be willing to find the money at a time when one tax can be reduced only by increasing another.

Yet somehow or other the extra salaries must be found—not only to attract fresh teachers, but to keep up the morale of those already working. The Burnham negotiations *must* be ended successfully in a way which will help to strengthen the teaching profession permanently.

For our children's sake, this great and pressing human problem has to be solved.

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Wives who go out to work

HAVING LIVED IN Leicester for twenty-three years, I was most interested in Edward Hogarth's article, "City Where Women Mean Business" (JOHN BULL, July 1). I remember my own surprise at finding all the married women either factory workers or "nurse women" to factory workers' children.

During the years of the depression it was no uncommon thing to find the men on the dole and the wives doing men's work in the factories. I, too, became a "working mother" in the last war and learnt to understand how much women appreciate the extra cash and the independence that a job in pleasant surroundings and jolly company gives them.—MRS. E. HODGSON, 27 Tentercroft Avenue, Syston, nr. Leicester.

. . . "With two incomes brought home there is nothing they need go without." But is this a good thing—wouldn't it be worth while sometimes for the wife to spend longer in making the home a real home instead of earning extra money to buy luxuries?—MRS. H. CAMERON, 6 Cobden Crescent, Edinburgh.

He Pedals Alone

DURING SEVERAL YEARS of lone riding, I have kept a sharp lookout for the type of club described by Don Everitt in "The Thrill Of Riding Wheel To Wheel" (JOHN BULL, July 1). Every club I have come across seems to have had one section only: the hardriders. Runs average well over 100 miles per day. But for this road-burning mania, hundreds like myself would be club members.—JOHN MORGAN, 27 Grosvenor Road, Rotherham, Yorks.

. . . The first thing I do when I plan for my holiday is to inquire about the cycling clubs in the district I intend visiting. During the last fifteen years I have not only been all over England and Scotland but also had the pleasure of riding wheel to wheel with all types of cyclists—from the road-scorchers to the carefree Sunday afternoon free-wheelers. —ALBERT FRENCH, Faversham, Kent.

Elementary English

WHY CAN'T ELOCUTION be taught in our primary and modern schools? Elementary schoolchildren like my son have a deplorably low standard of speech. "I diddun ge' wun nem til my fren sid sunnink" is a typical example of what I am constantly called upon to correct in my son's speech. What he meant was: "I didn't get one of them until my friend said something."—W. S., Kent.

That Alien Feeling

I WAS ASTONISHED to read that Mrs. H. D. ("Free Speech," July 1), is still treated as a leper after living eighteen years in Scotland. I am a German girl who married a Scotsman and I cannot praise too highly the courteous, warmhearted and considerate hospitality I have received at all times. —MRS. ELSE COEY, 19 Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan, Ayrshire.

. . . Until I left my native county I never realized how "foreign" one can feel in a strange district. In the last four years we have lived in five different districts—in each place I have felt I just don't "belong." —MRS. E. AYRES, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffs.

Jack Of All Trades

AT THIRTY-EIGHT I can look back on twenty-three working years as carpenter's apprentice; grocer's assistant; chore-boy in an iron foundry; dog-boy and general help in private service; assistant keeper on a pheasant farm; lad-cleaner, then adult-cleaner, fitter's mate and finally fitter on the former Great Western Railway; three years as a soldier in the Regular Army and six years a wartime soldier; driver-mechanic with the Control Commission in Germany; private chauffeur; car delivery firm driver; and, finally, a taxi-driver. Nearly all of my jobs have been open-air work; all workers in factories, shops or offices have my heartfelt sympathy. I have been jack-of-all-trades and master of none—but what happy memories I have to help me through my old age.—K. G. CARTER, 160 Howard Street, Oxford.

Beards? Oh, No!

MORE YOUNG MEN seem to be growing beards. I wonder why—surely they don't imagine they look nice? I have

often wondered, too, if they wash round them or if the beard gets wet at the same time. Anyway, they must all be single men, for I can't believe any woman would let her husband grow one.—MRS. J. P., Sheffield.

Baby Ward Snapshots

RECENTLY I RECEIVED from America a cabinet-size photograph of a baby boy, taken in the hospital when he was only one day old. Printed on the folder is the name of the Phoenixville Hospital—apparently they have a photographer attached to the hospital. It seems a splendid idea. Is there any hospital in England with such a service?—MRS. D. GILL, 4 Rosevale Terrace, Netherton, Maryport, Cumberland.

The Ministry of Health says it does not know of an English hospital which has its own photographer.

True-to-Life Serial

THE AUTHENTICITY OF Nevil Shute's description of Australia in "A Town Like Alice" has increased my enjoyment of this grand story. I have sailed right round the Australian continent at one time or another and have been to Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville. Like Joe Harman, I bought tickets in the Queensland "Golden Casket" lottery, though without his luck. — R. R., Sunderland.

. . . No other story has ever moved me as much as "A Town Like Alice." Thank you for the consistently long instalments.—Mrs. E. L. OATES, 21 Allnatt Avenue, Winnersh, Wokingham, Berks.

. . . I have seldom bought a novel before, and I've never read a book twice, but this is one I shall buy. I know I shall never grow tired of the moving and beautiful story of Jean and Joe.—MRS. MABEL WATERHOUSE, Hall Cottage, Hope, Sheffield.

A brief epilogue to "A Town Like Alice" starts on page 23.

Herald At Gipsy Coronation

COVER ARTIST GORDON NICOLL'S comments on gipsies (JOHN BULL, June 17) recalled to me the part I took in the crowning of Charles Faa Blyth as king of the Yetholm Gipsies fifty years ago at the lovely little village of Yetholm in Roxburghshire. I was a herald at that ceremony and still have the gipsy king's sword. My association with the tribe goes back to my grandfather, who went to the rescue of a young gipsy being attacked by three men. He earned the gratitude of the whole tribe and was asked to crown their queen, Esther Faa Blyth.—G. G., Berwick-on-Tweed.

Trials Of Triplets

UNDER THE PROVISIONS of the National Health Service Act, domestic help may be provided where a person is "ill, lying in, an expectant mother, mentally defective, aged, or a child not over school age." When triplets were added to our family last year my wife failed to qualify for help. But she may yet become eligible—coping with three infants and a baby of twenty-one months has a fair chance of making her either ill or mentally defective.—H. K., Edinburgh.

The local Health Committee has the power to authorize free domestic help in cases of this kind after considering them on their individual merits.

Letter From Chicago

ENGLAND, IT SEEMS, has no other idea of Chicago than as a gangster city. In fact, Chicago is full of churches, overflowing with movie cinemas, loaded with roller-skating rinks, cooled off with countless ice-cream joints, drenched in 8,000 taverns and overcrowded with street salvation bands.—CARL PETERSON, 3542 Carroll Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

John Bull welcomes readers' views, experiences and ideas for publication. A guinea is paid for every letter used. Mark the envelope "Free Speech" and make sure your full name and address is in the letter.

THIS WEEK'S COVER

RICHARD O. ROSE has an artist's grudge against ice-cream. "Before you can sit on the beach," he says, "you have to clear your way through licked wrappers and sticky little wooden spoons left by devotees of the tub and the choc-ice. Cornets and wafers are not so bad—there is no aftermath—and I can say one thing in favour of ice-cream: when empty and floating in the sea, the tubs make excellent pebble-throwing targets."

Schooldays... an anxious time for mothers

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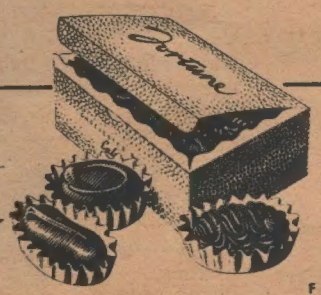

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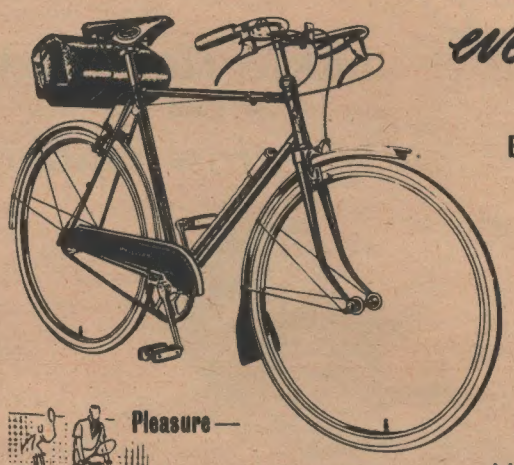

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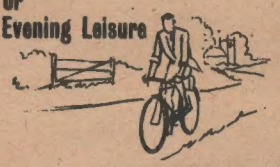

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Dog team nearing Base E on Stonington Island travels on the sea ice which surrounds the whole of Graham Land, isolating it for months on end

Antarctic adventure

by ***BERNARD STONEHOUSE***

A chance remark in a London pub—and I say goodbye to England. . . . I'm heading south, bound for a thousand days of Antarctic hazard and discovery

"HOW WOULD YOU LIKE to go to the Antarctic?" The voice came from over my shoulder in a Hampstead pub. The speaker had just returned from the Antarctic himself, and we were well known to each other.

"Why pick on me?" I asked. Then, as we talked and drank, the idea of staggering through a blizzard, with the temperature at sixty below, seemed romantic; and when we eventually parted company I had a Colonial Office address in my pocket, with an assurance that I was the sort they were looking for.

Even the cold, clear daylight of an April morning-after had little effect in damping the enthusiasm my encounter of the night before had fired. I was a naval officer, shortly to be demobbed, with flying experience, biological training and a place in a university waiting for me; but here was a chance to do field work in my subject in an unusual part of the world, and a chance to travel there which might never be repeated. I talked myself into it and posted my application.

"Why do you want to go to the Antarctic?" asked the chairman of a semicircle of administrators and explorers who comprised the selection board. I thought quickly, then decided to be honest. "I don't know," I said. "I want to do biological work in an interesting area——"

"No biologists," the chairman cut me short; and the secretary looked at me glumly. "I could go as a met. man and do biological work, too," I suggested; and the chairman muttered something about shrimping in my spare time. "Married?" a board member inquired; and from another: "Engaged, bankrupt or on the run?" They didn't wait for the answers.

The doctor decided I was mad but otherwise quite fit. "Astonishing good luck to you," wished the commander of my air station. "Good Lord!" said sisters, cousins and aunts. "You're in the

Off duty, Stonehouse poses by the bunkhouse chimney. Goggles are a protection against sun glare. He was told: "Take only sports coat and flannels"—advice he's glad he ignored

MY PART IN A GREAT UNDERTAKING

"ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE" is an account of my own experiences and those of my immediate companions in Graham Land. It is not a history or report of the work of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey. The good work at bases, other than the one I was at, I have had to leave out, and the day-to-day stories of some of the important sledging journeys must be told some other time. "Antarctic Adventure," my own story, written for JOHN BULL, records just a small part of the great undertaking in exploration in which I was privileged to serve.

Bernard Stonehouse

red," the bank manager told me. But I had the last word on the lot of them. I said "goodbye," and stepped up the gangplank of a boat bound for the Falkland Islands.

Five other passengers aboard the *Lafonia* had, like myself, orders for the Antarctic: John Ewer, tall and bespectacled, who carried an ice-axe in one hand and a neatly rolled umbrella in the other; Frank Elliott, a rock climber of renown, who became a base leader for two years and is now on the administrative staff that controls the work being done in the Antarctic; Doc Butson; Dick Burd, who was demobbed with me and was to die tragically in a base hut fire at the end of his second year; and John Huckle, an ex-submariner.

We knew very little of our prospects or the work. "You're going to the Falkland Islands Dependencies," a minor civil servant in the Colonial Office had said, pointing to the bottom of a Mercator's world map on which the Antarctic appeared as a vague squiggle. "Everything is supplied," he added. "Just take a sports coat and flannels."

Had we taken no more we would have worn sports coats and flannels for coal bunkering in the Falklands, tearing down old huts at some bases and building new ones at others, for shipping stores, rolling oil-drums and humping hundredweight bags of anthracite. Everything was supplied—but not until we reached our own bases.

We enjoyed our journey out, but the Falklands calmed us down somewhat. I think it was the flat, bleak vista, not unlike the Orkneys, peppered with rather nonchalant-looking sheep. The islanders were a small, friendly community, mainly of Scottish descent; they were to be our last link with civilization for quite some time.

The Parties Were Over

On Christmas Day, 1946, the Governor had us to dinner in his warm, comfortable Government House, and in the New Year we were ploughing southwards. The fun and the parties were over. We were to be members of F.I.D.S.—the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey—engaged in studying an area of the Antarctic known as Graham Land. (The territory is administered from the Falklands, though it lies several hundred miles away. This explains the rather ungainly title.)

Graham Land is as large as England and Scotland together and the interior is generally inaccessible, being about 5,000 feet high and guarded by formidable cliffs and precipices dropping straight into the sea. For most of the year the peninsula is surrounded by ice and you can't get at it from the sea, so the work is carried out from survey bases established at intervals along the coast and on the off-lying islands.

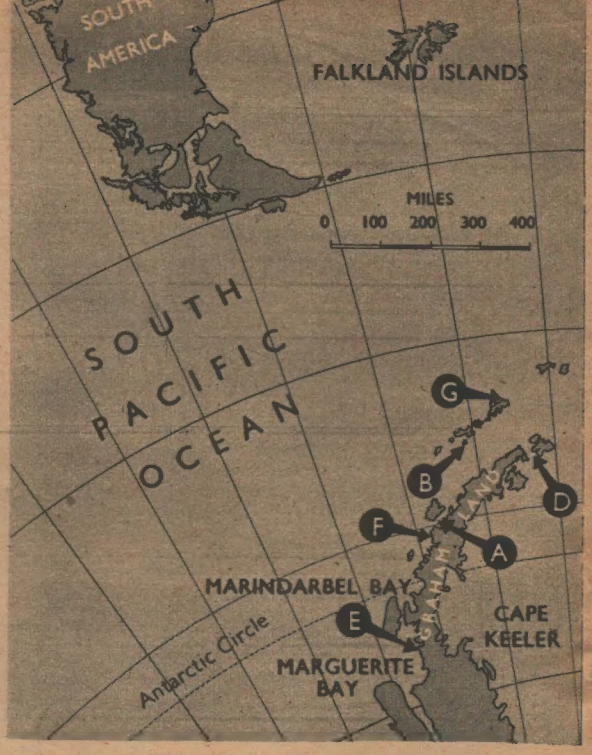
From some of these bases, notably Base D on the northern tip of the peninsula and Base E on Stonington Island, the interior can be reached by travelling over glaciers. These two bases were important for this reason, and were supplied with all the equipment necessary for Antarctic travel. They were large establishments, having nine or eleven men compared with the smaller, static bases of three or four. The bases are visited by a relief ship once a year. Relief personnel take over, the base is restocked with fuel, food and general stores, and the ship departs with the old guard. The routine appeared straightforward, but what we really wanted to know was why Whitehall should have become interested in a drab white stretch of the Antarctic continent. What were the issues involved?

The answer, we discovered, was that this, after all, was British territory, and that a move was at last being made to learn something about it. Mineral resources were being surveyed and their possibilities examined; there might be valuable deposits of inestimable importance to Britain. More accurate maps were needed of the area and the weather data collected might be needed to assist future airways development. Finally, our presence in the Antarctic owed something to our sense of duty and national pride; it would be a pity to leave others to explore and develop a vast area that was discovered first by the courage and enterprise of British sailors long ago.

Menace Of Floating Ice

I remember the excitement on sighting our first iceberg; had we realized then how much of the stuff we would have to look at for the next two or three years, I doubt if that first anaemic-looking little berg would have been received so enthusiastically. We were on the last lap of our journey south, aboard the M.V. *Trepassey*, a wooden ship of about 300 tons. Soon the pack-ice was around us, floating in loose pans—harmless enough unless a ship is trapped against the land, with a high wind pushing the pack-ice in from the sea. The pressure can stop a ship and crush it to matchwood, the way it crushed Shackleton's.

Our first call was Base B—Deception Island, shaped like a doughnut with a piece bitten out.



Arrowed are British bases during 1948-49. C and H, both in South Orkneys, are off the map

It was an eerie, desolate place, haunted by the ghosts of Norwegian whalers and littered with the fragments of colossal whale skeletons. The base had been off the air since September, and we were worried, not knowing what to expect. It was getting dark as the *Trepassey* sailed into the harbour sounding her hooter, with an echoing circle of sheer white cliffs joining in the chorus. One of the crew who had been there in 1946, said: "The base hut has gone." We put a boat over the side, and the doctor and three of us climbed in, ready to go ashore and see what had happened.

Then the door of a small, derelict cabin was flung open and four dark figures poured out, jumping and waving their arms. They piled into a disreputable-looking dory and started towards us, one of them rowing and the others baling furiously. Later they told us what had happened. Their base hut had been burnt down, with most of the stores and equipment in it, and they had been living in the cabin on emergency rations ever since. For the new relief, their story was a grim introduction to the Antarctic.

We formed only half the relief party; the others were following in the *Fitzroy*, a little iron vessel which was to use the channel made through the ice by the *Trepassey*. But as it was necessary to clear the four members of the base after their ordeal, I was left at Deception Island with Doc Butson to hold the fort.

Butson was an amiable companion—about twenty-five, spectacled, dark-haired, medium built and enthusiastic about the profession in which he had not long been qualified. We did

With Dave Jones pushing off, Reg, Tommy and I set out. It was to be Ice-Cold Katy's last trip

Base E, Stonington Island, nearest to South Pole. Despite all-year-round blizzards, lettuce, carrots and tomatoes were grown in the greenhouse

not have to wait long at the whalebone-yard. The *Trepassey* returned with the *Fitzroy* towards the end of January, picked us up and we sailed down the still, silent De Gerlache Strait, a narrow and beautiful channel between perpendicular ice walls, with mineral-tinted peaks lifting above them, blue and green and purple. Our first job was to visit a new base, F, on a group of islands half-way down the peninsula. *Trepassey* anchored just off the shore of one of these islands and the crew helped us to erect the new hut while the *Fitzroy* visited Base A, a few miles farther north. Then came the news we were waiting for. The ice had cleared out of Marguerite Bay, and Base E, the most southerly base, could now be relieved.

We set sail in the *Trepassey* right away and three days later rounded the headland within sight of the insignificant little huts at the foot of the blue glacier. On the shore were ten men, grinning contentedly and obviously smartened up for the occasion. We were their first human visitors for nearly a year.

Our Hut Was Spotless

Stonington Island is a kidney-shaped piece of land linked by a glacial shelf to the mainland, which runs up steeply to a plateau of about 5,000 feet. Here Surgeon-Commander Bingham, leader of the survey, had established Base E a year previously, trained the dog teams which made our future sledging journeys possible, and built a hut to accommodate about a dozen men in reasonable warmth and comfort. The hut was spotlessly clean and tidy, and a terrific effort had obviously been made to give us a good impression of our future home. We were very grateful.

The old guard did not waste much time in getting out. On February 4, 1947, two days later, we watched the *Trepassey* slip round the headland, out of view. Ten of us remained behind. Five were staying on for the second year. There was Ken Butler, a tall, hefty Irishman of thirty, with a sense of humour to match his size. He had been a major in the Royal Signals and was now in command of the base. Twenty-nine year old Kevin Walton, D.S.C., was another Irishman and an ex-naval engineer lieutenant. Kevin was a keen mountaineer. He made it his business to study sledging and camping techniques which he and Bingham had perfected. He was an active, vital, amusing creature, and has been awarded the Albert Medal for rescuing a colleague from a crevasse. The colleague was ex-Major John Tonkin, M.C., who had served in the Special Air Service among the Maquis. He was about twenty-six, slim and of medium height. He came from Bournemouth and is now, I believe, drilling for oil in Borneo. Reg Freeman, then, at thirty-two, the old man of the party, had been a regular in the Royal Engineers. He was dark and slightly built, a very precise surveyor, and a kindly, human fellow. Douglas Mason, of Gravesend, late sapper captain in his middle twenties, was also a surveyor. He was small, tough and substantial, and had a quiet sense of humour. He is now at Oxford.

Then there were the five new arrivals. Tommy Thomson was a Scotsman in his twenties, dark, tall and quiet. He had been awarded the D.S.C. in the Fleet Air Arm and had come as the pilot. David Jones, a fair, stocky, cheerful Yorkshireman of twenty-eight, had come from the R.A.F. as our aircraft engineer. Dave was a thorough, competent craftsman, evidence of whose work was soon to be seen all over the base. He had been a prisoner of war for three years and seemed to know how to fit into any community. Mac McLeod, a Falkland Islander of twenty, had been born in Scotland and had tried his hand at sheep-rearing and carpentry. He was quiet and useful and came as a general handyman. Doc Butson, who had stayed behind with me at Deception Island, and myself, as met. man and biologist, completed the party.

Inevitably, we had arrived in our sports coats and flannels, with a few items we had been able to pick up in the Falklands, so the first thing we got was an issue of polar kit—goggles, battledress, khaki shirts, long-sleeve woollen vests and long underpants, pullovers, sweaters, socks, the essential windproof trousers and "anorak" (a hooded jacket which ties at the wrist and waist) and boots—ammunition boots, Esquimaux-made sealskin boots, cold-weather "mukluks" or sledging boots and reindeer-skin moccasins for the very cold weather.

My first job consisted of taking four met. readings a day and keeping a log of the maximum and minimum temperatures, snow or rain, humidity, visibility, cloud heights, wind direction and strength. Three times a day this information had to be encoded and radioed to Port Stanley. The observations required my going outside the hut in all weathers.

Warm Enough To Sunbathe

Temperatures in our part of the Antarctic varied between a minimum −41 deg. F. in the winter and a maximum of + 45 deg. F. in the summer. The weather is mainly bad with a high percentage of dull, overcast days and heavy continuous snow. For the long winter months the sun disappears. Midwinter Day in the Antarctic might be as light as a December dawn in England for a few hours, but occasionally in the winter we would have a very beautiful day with a clear, translucent sky and little or no wind. The temperature would fall steadily into the minus thirties and mist would rise in clouds from the hut, the dogs and the sea-ice. In summer the sun would often be hot enough for us to strip down and sunbathe, but the glare made goggles a necessity, and, with the light reflected from so many surfaces, there was always the danger of bad sunburn. Blizzards, of course, came both in the summer and winter.

Antarctic conditions do not really correspond to those near the North Pole, where large areas are habitable. The white deserts south of the Antarctic Circle have been trodden only by explorers, for the southern cold lasts all the year round and the country is incapable of supporting any life in the snow save a few tiny plants and insects. Seals and penguins, which depend on the sea, are plentiful, and a number of cormorants, skuas, petrels and black-backed gulls visit in the summer. These move north again as soon as the sea freezes over and cuts off their access to the fish.

There was work enough for us in those last few months of the summer. We checked and stacked our stores, took over our dog teams and learned how to use them, erected a nissen hut for a bathroom, with a forty-gallon drum built over a brick stove to serve as a hot-water system. A hangar was designed and constructed for the Auster aircraft which Thomson and Jones assembled.

Seals Shot At Pointblank Range

An important job in preparation for the winter was laying up a stock of seal meat for the dogs. Weddell seals were the most familiar inhabitants of the sea-ice, and were usually to be seen near a tide crack, basking in the sun. They are grey-spotted furry beasts, with whiskers and large, spaniel eyes, about nine feet long and weighing half a ton. I liked Weddell seals and hated killing them, but there is enough meat on one animal to satisfy eighty dogs, and the liver provides a meal for about twenty men. We shot them with rifles and revolvers, almost at pointblank range, for they would look up trustingly as we approached.

On March 2, Tonkin took a sledging party on to the plateau to look for a route into the Weddell Sea. They had not been out a fortnight when one morning a ship came up the channel and dropped anchor with a clatter just off the ice-foot. It was an American Antarctic expedition, led by Finn Ronne. We had been expecting them and knew that they had come to occupy empty huts near our own and carry on the work that Byrd's expedition had left off in 1940.

The Americans consisted of twenty-one men and two women—the wives of Finn Ronne and his chief pilot, Harry Darlington. Some of them appeared to resent our presence at first and gave the impression that we were interlopers; but underneath we could sense the warm and friendly

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"Touch him again and I'll skin you," she said. "I'll pulverize you." Monk had sand in his eyes. He yelled: "I'll tell my big brother of you"

The bear pit

by ALASTAIR SCOBIE

ILLUSTRATED BY MIRIAM TROOP

The gang picked on me because I could play the violin. I was scared stiff—until that mad moment at the zoo

THE GANG PICKED on me because I was learning the violin. Every Wednesday and Saturday I used to trudge along to my teacher's with the fiddle in its case under my arm—it was a cheap, factory-made fiddle with a label inside saying it was a "Stradivarius Type," which tickled me even at that age—I was just ten.

Always the first salvo came from the boy I was later to know as Monk. "Still fiddling, matey?"

"I'll tell my sister," I used to say, backing away.

Unfortunately, I had no big brother, but the reference to my sister had a certain quietening effect. She was then the biggest girl in her class, with the temper of a wildcat and the strength of a rangy, hockey-playing schoolgirl.

When the gang first set on me I *had* told my sister, and once she walked up the street with me, and gave the gang, all of it, such a sharp drubbing that my way was smoothed for nearly six violin lessons.

Then they got more confident, and on the non-appearance of my sister in response to my threats, they closed in, in a ring, either squealing in imitation of what they thought my fiddle must sound like (and how right they were!) or squeaking in a fair imitation of my sister.

There were about seven in the gang, as well as I can remember. Monk, the leader, was a fearsome lad of eleven, who inevitably wore a filthy football jersey. This was not because his parents were too poor to buy him other clothes—in fact his father was a prosperous lorry-driver—but because Monk followed the fortunes of an American street gang, whose adventures appeared at the local cinema from time to time, and the leader of this gang, who was not unlike Monk in appearance, inevitably wore a torn jersey.

The others were more or less like Monk. Two of them were, admittedly, female, but such viragos of the back alleys that sex made no difference at all. They had fought for their right to be in the gang, and they prided themselves on being no less scruffy, no less tough than Monk himself.

If I remember rightly the favourite approach of these two young ladies was to come up to some unsuspecting male child, bash him hard on the nose, pull his hair out in handfuls, shouting, at the same time: "Hit a woman, would you? I'll show you!"

This piece of dialogue had come from a cowboy film.

I remember that fateful day when they hemmed me in against the unyielding railings of Casbah Street, Brixton, and prodded my fiddle case.

"Still fiddling?"

"His dad's a wide boy, Monk."

My poor dad was an auctioneer.

"Nah, his dad ain't wide, he just wears pointy shoes."

"Come on, cock, show us the old musica."

"Why don't you let your 'air grow? Can't play the fiddle wiv short 'air."

And they danced and gyrated and roared with laughter as if these sallies were the funniest things that had ever been said.

"I must go," I said, "I'll get into trouble if I don't go. My teacher'll tell my old man."

"Your teacher's a clot, then. Let's see the fiddle."

"No, you'll break it."

"Break it, he says! We'll break it! We won't stand for being insulted, will we?" This came from Monk, imitating the manner of his hero, "Come on, you can show us the fiddle or fight me!"

It was a terrible prospect. I was a little taller than Monk, but that ferocious face of his, twisted now into the sort of grimace savages use to frighten their enemies, was enough to quell me into submission. I handed him the fiddle case and he took out my fiddle.

If I had ever looked vaguely like being able to play the thing well I would have probably found enough courage to fight for it, but the fiddle had been one my father had been unable to sell at an auction. The owner had never come back for it, and it had been handed to me. This being the case, I was not humiliated by what happened afterwards.

Monk took the fiddle from its case with some reverence. He squinted down the bow to make sure it was

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JOHN BULL July 22 1950

Diplomat with a baton

by IAN BEVAN

Sir Malcolm shows the world that British music is worth hearing. Some girls prefer him to Sinatra

The dress suit is always immaculate. Girls are fascinated by his music—and his dark good looks

TWENTY-TWO YEARS AGO, youthful Harold Malcolm Watts Sargent, from Stamford, Lincolnshire, was faced with the choice of continuing the struggle as a freelance orchestral and choral conductor in the provinces, or accepting the offer of a London cinema to play the organ three times a day for ten minutes a time at a salary of £7,000 a year. Sargent, who was then earning about £300 a year, chose to carry on the hard way and this week, when he is due to step on to the rostrum at the Royal Albert Hall to conduct his first concert as the B.B.C.'s new conductor-in-chief, he can feel assured that the struggle has been worth while.

His income is now at least twice what the cinema would have paid him, but that's not his only cause for satisfaction. Sargent has never fought for money. His big fight has been for world recognition of British music (something he could hardly have achieved at the organ console of a West End cinema) and it is as the nation's musical ambassador-at-large that he has scored his greatest success.

Breaking Down A Prejudice

Since the war he has conducted concerts—all of them featuring music by British composers—in the U.S.A., Australia, Switzerland, South Africa, Norway, Italy, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Gibraltar, Sweden and Greece. Recently he made a ten-week trip of 18,000 miles, during which he gave twelve concerts in the capitals of Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Chile, where he conducted the music of Vaughan Williams, Elgar, Holst, Bliss and Britten as well as works by Argentinian, Brazilian and Chilean composers.

Almost without pausing for breath, he swung into preparations for the summer "Proms," with twenty-four concerts to conduct in the next eight weeks, again with a heavy emphasis on British music, for even the British public still needs to be convinced that worthwhile music is not a monopoly of the Germans, French and Italians. No one has done more to break down this prejudice, at home and abroad, than Sir Malcolm Sargent, and no one has worked harder to do it.

This high-pressure activity, which will be intensified by his new B.B.C. post, is carried on by a man of fifty-five who in 1932 was sent to Switzerland to die of abdominal tuberculosis. Hard work seems to agree with him, for the doctors who checked him before he left on his South American trip endorsed him A1, and a Greek music critic who saw him for the first time at a concert in Athens earlier this year was so deceived by his athletic appearance that he referred to "this young English conductor."

Sargent's appearance is not only youthful but strikingly handsome, and the girl who rushed up to him after a Manchester concert was not alone in her loudly voiced opinion: "He's so good-looking you wouldn't think he was a musician." Another Greek critic, this time a woman, was moved to write in her review of "the fascination which he exercises not only with his baton but with his own appearance, which reminds me of a sinewy Spanish nobleman." This vaguely Spanish, or at least non-English, look has often been the subject of comment, generally by people seeking to prove that every good musician has to have a touch of foreign blood in him somewhere. But Sargent, so far as he knows, is pure English for generations back without even the suggestion of a sixteenth-century love affair between some forebear and a shipwrecked sailor from the Armada.

It was his well-developed instinct for doing the right thing at the right time, rather than any Spanish blood in his veins, which caused him to make the perfect response to an unusual tribute paid him by the members of the *Orquesta Naçional* in Madrid last year. When he arrived at his second rehearsal, the players had been so impressed by him the day before that they rose and played the flourish which is reserved for the arrival in the bull-ring of the most popular matadors. Without batting an eyelid, Sargent made the traditional response. He threw his hat—an English homburg—across the hall and shouted *"Olé!"*

Born With The Gift Of Pitch

Sargent's devotion to music dates from his early boyhood, and was encouraged by his father, who was church organist at St. John's, Stamford, where his son was a choirboy. Malcolm was born with the gift of absolute pitch, could read music scores almost as soon as he could read books, and had announced his intention of becoming a musician when he was six.

At sixteen he entered Peterborough Cathedral

as an articled pupil to the famous organist Dr. Keaton; by nineteen he was an accomplished organist with his Bachelor of Music degree from Durham University. The first World War started when he was twenty and he served as a private in the 27th Durham Light Infantry. After the war he studied with Moiseiwitsch, who persuaded him to take up the piano instead of the organ. He also started composing, and Sir Henry Wood commissioned him to write a piece for the Leicester Music Festival. He was so late delivering the manuscript that Wood refused to rehearse it and told Sargent he would have to conduct it himself.

The piece was called "Impressions on a Windy Day," and the Leicester audience defied all rules of concert etiquette by insisting on an encore. Sir Henry liked it so much that he not only decided to include it in three of his London programmes but asked Sargent to repeat his performance as guest conductor of his own work at Queen's Hall.

This was 1921; Sargent was twenty-six, and his star was definitely rising. Then followed ten years of hard and often unrewarding work. He conducted every type of music except jazz and musical comedy.

Nobody Expected Him To Live

In 1932, when he was within hailing distance of being one of the nation's top-ranking conductors, Sargent developed a high temperature which persisted for days without obvious cause. At first the doctors thought he was suffering from the effects of an insect bite; then came the dread diagnosis—TB. He was sent to a sanatorium in Switzerland, Sir Thomas Beecham conducted a testimonial concert to raise funds for his treatment, and his close personal friend, the Duke of Kent, flew to Switzerland to visit him. A deep-seated operation was performed, after which he had to lie on his back, almost immobile, for eleven months—"not," as he recently recalled, "the happiest form of existence." No one expected him to live, but after two years Sargent came back to England completely cured and stronger than ever.

Back in England, he quickly picked up the threads of his career again, and by the outbreak of war he was established as one of the top half-dozen English conductors, and had made the first of his musical sorties abroad. In September, 1939, he was in Australia, where they offered him a comfortable house and a large salary if he would stay for the duration. His answer was to take the first available plane back to London.

His job in the second World War was picked for him by a Battle of Britain pilot who came to his dressing-room one night after a Beethoven recital and said: "I can go on fighting for another two years easily after hearing that." Sargent was so impressed by the pilot's sincerity that he joined forces with Jack Hylton and organized a series of popular concerts—a project to which the Queen gave her unofficial blessing after he had outlined his plans in a half-hour audience at Buckingham Palace. For some time he averaged more than a concert a day, and played to thousands who had never sat through a programme of classical music before. He recalls an East End labourer who attended a number of concerts and told him: "One thing 'itler's done is made me a blinkin' 'ighbrow."

"Ambassador" In A Bomb-rack

In 1942 Sargent was unofficially "enlisted" in the Diplomatic Corps and sent to Sweden in the bomb-rack of a Mosquito on the first of numerous trips he made to neutral countries, where he conducted concerts of British music as an antidote to German cultural propaganda. While he was in Sweden he caught a bad cold and was most attentively nursed by a manservant who brewed him hot toddy and translated the news for him from the Swedish papers. When he was better, Sargent happened to ask the man what nationality he was. "German," was the unexpected answer.

Not long before the war ended, Sargent was invited by the National Broadcasting Company of America to conduct its orchestra in four special concerts. This was Toscanini's orchestra—probably the best in the world—and it was the first time an Englishman had been asked to conduct it. Toscanini paid him the compliment of attending his first rehearsal, and after the first concert the orchestra rose and cheered him.

Although Sargent is not given to indulging in controversy, he stirred up a hornet's nest in America by stating at a Press conference that "Sinatra is not a noise to be swooned at." The Sinatra rage was then at its height, and Sargent could scarcely have caused more of a furore if he had praised Hitler or refused to conduct the American national anthem. Some months later, after a concert at Nottingham, a girl rushed up to him and declared: "You just lay me out, duckie; Frank Sinatra's got nothing on you." The bobby-sox craze had turned full circle.

After the war he got firmly into his stride as a world traveller, and readers of *The Times* personal column have grown used to the frequent paragraphs which record his arrival at Sydney, Zurich, Oslo, Johannesburg, Montevideo, Gothenburg, or some other distant city.

He was knighted in 1947 at the same investiture as his firm friend Sir Laurence Olivier, and the two celebrated by lunching with Vivien Leigh at the Ivy. Sargent has numerous friends in the theatrical world, among them Athene Seyler, Danny Kaye and Greer Garson. Dickie Attenborough and Sheila Sim are also old friends of his, and, together with the Oliviers, were Sargent's guests at his Good Friday performance of the "Messiah" last year.

After the concert Sargent was dripping with sweat and obviously tired, but so carried away by the music of his favourite oratorio that he insisted on taking his four friends back to his flat, where he played the score through to them again on his magnificent Bechstein concert grand—a bequest from Mrs. Samuel Courtauld and probably the most perfect piano in existence. "He not only played it," Attenborough related the other day, "but he sang most of the parts as well. We had two concerts in the same evening, and I think I enjoyed the second better than the first." Sargent has yet to be persuaded to listen to one of Attenborough's disk-jockey sessions, and has never consciously heard "Music, Music, Music." He is not so much irritated by jazz as bored, but he loved *Annie Get Your Gun* and described the music as "brilliant."

His only professional secret is the name of the man who makes his batons. These are pencil-thin willow wands, about eighteen inches long and weighing less than an ounce, which he can crack like a whip, and woodworkers hate making them. He has found a London engineer who turns them for him in his workshop as a hobby, but not even the King of Denmark could extract the name and address from Sargent, although he gave the King four as a present to use when His Majesty conducts the Royal Copenhagen Orchestra.

The slender baton urges, coaxes, warns. Who makes them is Sargent's one secret

Sorrow In His Private Life

Sargent's private life has been scarred by considerable unhappiness, and the worst blow was when his only daughter Pamela died just before the war from the after-effects of infantile paralysis. From a childhood drawing of her, he has had Serge Rodzianko paint a portrait in oils, and John Merton do an exquisite silverpoint engraving. Often he sits alone in his study, gazing at these portraits and remembering the child who had meant so much to him. His only son, Peter, is following in his father's footsteps. During the war he left Eton to join the Fleet Air Arm, and now he's at Oxford studying for a degree in music. He is tall and slim like his father, and the two might almost be mistaken for twins, especially when they go walking in Kensington Gardens, each in immaculately cut clothes, each with his left hand characteristically in his pocket.

Clothes are important to Sargent, for, as he says, "There's no reason why a musician should be slovenly or untidy." He is always carefully dressed, even at rehearsal, and is never seen in his shirt sleeves or without a tie. He has three dress suits for evening concerts, one of them made of special light material for the tropics.

Sargent's trademark is a carnation buttonhole—red for afternoon concerts and white for evening—and it's a point of pride with his secretary that he should never be without one. His busy life keeps one secretary occupied all day on his business affairs, and another has a full-time job looking after his music library of more than 1,000 full scores and hundreds of complete sets of orchestral material.

Unruffled—Even By Russians

On the day before a concert, Sargent is up early for rehearsal; on the day after he tries to sleep until midday. He eats lightly, drinks glucose and orange juice in the intervals of concerts, likes red wine with meals, and smokes a cigar after dinner.

Almost nothing worries him. When he was going to Vienna by train in the winter of 1947, Red Army soldiers found his papers were not in order, ejected him from the train, and made him carry his luggage three-quarters of a mile through deep snow and across a broken bridge over a flooded river to the American guardhouse. Reporters who interviewed him later expected an angry tirade and instead were told by a smiling Sargent: "It was not their fault; I didn't have the right pass."

The soft answer that turns away wrath is one of his specialities, but even he was left at a loss for words when a gushing woman, introduced to him in the artists' room after a concert, said: "Sir Malcolm, I think you're wonderful. I love the way you move your arms, and it's so clever of you to keep in such perfect time with the music!"

THE END

A hush had fallen in the crowded bar. She turned and faced the group of expectant drinkers. "To Tom," she cried. "Please drink to Tom"

Silence for Mrs. Hawkes

This was a special night. She knew what to do and how to make it seem an accident. Then came the crash

by KENNETH GRENVILLE MYER

IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME, Mrs. Hawkes reflected as she ran a cloth along the already spotless bar, but tonight would see the end of it. After tonight there would be no need to worry further; she could be proud in the knowledge of a job completed, carried through to the end in spite of everything.

Mrs. Hawkes glanced round the saloon bar with satisfaction. The room was empty, though a fire burned brightly in the big grate, for it was close on half past five. She lifted the flap of the bar and walked through the maze of little tables, each with an ashtray with a distiller's name on and flanked by two straight-backed tub chairs.

She caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror that hung between the two windows, its reflecting surface broken by the lettering of a liquor advertisement, and paused in recollection: traces of the dark beauty which Tom had loved so much remained. She still had a beautiful skin which had repulsed the attacks of the years; her eyes were as dark and lustrous as ever and her mouth firm. Her hair was greying now, but she did not care. She was Mrs. Hawkes of the King Alfred and knew herself to appear a fine woman, and, while life remained to her, so would she be as she had been.

She had chosen tonight rather than any other night because, though none but she remembered, had Tom Hawkes still been alive they would have been celebrating their wedding anniversary—the forty-third. Any night would have done really. There was no urgency for a few months but she had a bit of a fancy for their wedding-day; it brought her closer to Tom. Forty-three years ago! Tom had been a fine man then: tall, with a fine pair of shoulders on him, and an arm to squeeze your waist till you had no breath left. Funny, that was what she remembered best about him.

Tom always saw himself as the chairman of the poor man's club and an authority in all ways to be referred to with respect. There'd been another side to him, of course, the daredevil side that had made him a pioneer flyer, the side that tempted him to fly low over the King Alfred sometimes, to bring her heart bumping up to her mouth. And then he'd crashed and been killed. It was not the crash that had killed him, the doctor had said. He'd died from burns. If only someone had been on the spot to extricate him . . . but the thought no longer gave her pain.

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM LITTLE

And now it was her turn. Six months ago the doctor had told her what was in store for her. She was a brave woman and it did not take her long to reach a decision. She would not wait for death but would go gladly to meet it.

Upstairs in a locked drawer lay a little bottle containing the means of her release, and at midnight precisely she would lay down the burden and go to join Tom. It would appear an accident, of course, an overdose of the sleeping draught. She had carried on Tom's way of life as best she could for three decades, now it was time to go.

Time to go? Time to open! Eva Hawkes started as the clock struck the half hour. It would never do to be late tonight. She crossed the saloon swiftly and, back behind the bar, called to Ned, who had charge of the public, to know if all was ready in that bar, and if so, to open up. Kitty, the barmaid, took her station and the King Alfred opened.

To none of the pints of bitter, the halves of stout, the gins and lime and the double whiskies

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The author with Col. Chiang Wei-kuo, son of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek

What happens when Communism sweeps into a Far Eastern city? Harrison Forman, war correspondent who has covered every big event in China during the last fifteen years, saw the Communists march into Shanghai, "wickedest city in the world." In this first-hand report he describes how the conquerors "persuaded" Shanghailanders to beat their breasts in public

I saw Red Shanghai confess its sins

by HARRISON FORMAN

Press campaigns did not stop coin-traffickers.

ONE DAY RECENTLY I was standing near the entrance to the British Consulate in Shanghai when a foreigner came up in a pedicab—a bicycle-drawn rickshaw. The foreigner alighted and gave the pedicabbie 300 *Jen Min Piao*, the Chinese Communist currency. The coolie howled for 500 J.M.P. As the usual crowd began to gather, a traffic policeman came over. The foreigner pointed out that he had ridden only three blocks and that 300 J.M.P. was about three times the customary fare for that distance. However, to avoid an incident, he offered the coolie another 100 J.M.P. When the pedicabbie refused this the exasperated foreigner flung the note to the pavement and turned to move away.

Some young hotheads in the crowd grabbed him. They demanded that he pick up the note and apologize to the coolie. Struggling to keep his temper, the foreigner turned to the policeman.

"Order me to pick up that note and apologize to the coolie," he said. The tone of his voice indicated he would refuse to do so. An incident was in the making.

The policeman was an old-timer. The stripes on his sleeve indicated more than twenty years of service. He looked first at the foreigner, then at the coolie, finally at the crowd. Then he picked up the note, deliberately tore it into pieces and whacked the coolie so hard he fell to his knees. Turning to the astonished spectators, he flayed them for their dishonesty, discourtesy and lack of common decency. As the crowd melted he apologized to the foreigner on behalf of his people.

Unfortunately, the policeman disappeared from his post the next day. He was a minority of one who had dared to oppose a new trend in Red China. From the hour the Communist conquerors first entered Shanghai, they manifested a positive mania for public apologies, which, they insisted, should be delivered with an almost religious fervour. Gangsters, black marketeers, prostitutes and pimps beat their breasts and bared the lurid details of their wrongdoings to fascinated street audiences; but the Communists' exhortation to confess and be saved applied not only to disreputable Chinese but to honest Westerners as well. The "foreign imperialists" were lectured in the Press, in speeches and on the radio and urged to change their "evil" ways.

"Abandon your arrogance and provocative acts," the official *Liberation Daily News* pleaded. Protection for foreign lives and property had been guaranteed by the Communists, but this held good, it was pointed out, only as long as the foreigner obeyed the laws and regulations of the new People's Government. When a foreigner *did* get into trouble—however inconsequential the incident—the Red reformers went to town with righteous indignation.

For example, when a British tramway official got into an argument with a troublesome employee and punched him, he was immediately taken to a police station. There he was "educated" for three weeks until he finally confessed his crime and offered abject apologies to the employee, the police, the people of China and the People's Liberation Army. The case was not closed, however, until the general manager of the company agreed to discharge the Englishman—after twenty-five years of service—pay "medical expenses" to the injured Chinese employee and publicly apologize to the company's staff, the people of China and the Liberation Army.

Diplomat Had To Apologize

This incident, and others like it, received considerable publicity in the local Press. Soon the "imperialistic" foreigner became fair game for all kinds of abuse and petty racketeering.

R. T. Callender, for instance, the Administrative Officer at the British Consulate, had hired two houseboys for a probationary period of one month. He decided at the end of that period that their work was not satisfactory for permanent employment. The houseboys demanded six months' pay. There was an argument, the police were called and Callender was obliged not only to pay but to apologize to all and sundry.

This insistence on "apologies" has, apparently, created an urge to confess one's sins which has swept through Red-occupied Shanghai. Everyone there says he has resolved to work harder, love his neighbour and help to build a new China.

I saw ten dejected men standing under a traffic light in downtown Shanghai. Their elegant dress and prominent paunches revealed the ten as gentlemen of means, but alert constables standing by indicated that they were under arrest. Coolies beat drums and clashed cymbals until a large crowd gathered.

Soon, one of the police officers stepped forward. The men, he told the delighted crowd had been caught playing mah-jongg. As everyone knew, gambling had been declared a crime against the people since the "liberation" of Shanghai by the Communists. These culprits, the constable said, wished to plead for the remission of their sins.

One by one the gamblers stepped forward. Tearfully, they confessed their guilt. They had not realized the full significance of the New Order in China. They were sorry for their conduct and, at the same time, grateful to the Communist authorities for this opportunity to purge themselves.

The crowd applauded and the men were released; but they had lost much face—a punishment more devastating to a self-respecting Chinese than a long term in prison.

Again, Li Kuo-hua, a plainclothes policeman, entranced a group of shoppers as he told how he had "taken liberties" with women on his beat. Wang Li-fu, a ticket spiv, denounced himself before a queue of theatregoers. Chen Hsiao-chi, a rice dealer, confessed to his customers that he had been charging first-grade prices for second-grade rice.

All this is part of the new campaign of confession. When the S.S. *General Gordon* arrived to evacuate 1,500 Westerners from Nationalist-blockaded Shanghai, the cargo loaded aboard her was plastered with slogans from the dock workers. The stevedores apologized for their past misconduct. Henceforth, they promised, there would be no more strikes, no more pilfering of cargo, no more petty racketeering. "Please do not pay more than the authorized fees for the handling of cargo," one slogan read, "and report any demand for 'squeeze' (graft) to the office of our union."

Cynical Shanghailanders rubbed their eyes. It was unbelievable. It seemed truly as if the

Even processions of slogan-bearing girls failed. So the Reds used humour to kill inflation

world's wickedest city had suddenly got religion.

The day came when the Red reformers decided to clean up the city's fleshpots. As the world's fourth largest city and a port of call for ships of many flags, Shanghai had always been a happy hunting ground for gangsters, confidence tricksters, procurers and dope pedlars. Kidnappings were so common that rich men travelled in bullet-proof cars. Opium dives thrived, the heavy, sweetish odour that shrouded them being unmistakable blocks away. Whole streets were lined with gambling houses, beer parlours and cheap cabarets. There were more prostitutes per head in Shanghai than anywhere else in the world.

Racketeers Packed Off Home

The most remarkable feature of the Reds' anti-vice drive was that persuasion and education were employed instead of punitive measures. Prostitutes were offered jobs in shops or factories. Pickpockets and small-time racketeers were transported to their ancestral villages, where they could go back to farming. Vendors of pornographic books and photographs were warned in plenty of time to clear their stocks so that no burdensome financial loss would be incurred through confiscation by the police. Dance halls, cabarets, bars and other "time-wasting" establishments were not closed, but taxed heavily to discourage patronage.

For a time after the Reds' arrival in Shanghai, the city's most vexatious evil was the rampant speculation in Chinese silver dollars. This speculation had been largely responsible for the collapse of the Nationalists' paper Gold Yuan in pre-Red Shanghai. The Nationalists had executed a few of the money-changers as examples to the others, but the speculators merely went underground and continued their activities.

At first the Communist authorities tried to discourage this coin trafficking with a Press campaign. Nobody paid much attention. One morning I watched a Red soldier on sentry duty grow steadily more impatient with the impertinence of a silver dollar hawker and the shoulder-shrugging indifference of a policeman nearby. After a time, the soldier called the pedlar over and stood him next to the constable. When I passed that corner three hours later, the red-faced policeman and the worried black-marketeer were still standing together, surrounded by a circle of grinning spectators.

The Communists still seemed anxious to deal with the situation with patience and persuasion. Speakers at kerbside markets urged that the illegal money-changing be stopped. But no sooner did the speech stop than the dollars began to clink again. Then the administration felt impelled to maintain its authority. Soon detachments of troops and police were ordered out to round up kerbside speculators. Thousands were brought in. Amateurs and small fry were turned loose with sharp warnings. Known professionals had their coins confiscated and were detained for "re-education." In certain cases, hardened offenders were locked up and ordered to clink their coins for two non-stop days and nights. Those caught with large sums were obliged to remain in prison until they had spent the entire amount on food—every mouthful of which they had to consume personally.

It was punishment with a sense of humour, but it proved much more effective than the Nationalists' executions. Soon, to the Shanghailanders' amazement, silver dollar speculation was almost completely wiped out and, almost for the first time since the end of the war with Japan, the Chinese had an inflation-free currency.

This helped to solve another problem. Shanghai's population had almost doubled during and since the war with Japan. Runaway inflation and the housing shortage became so bad that by the time the Reds took over in May, 1949, you had to pay as much as £2,000 for the "key" when renting an ordinary flat whose legal rent ceiling was only a pound or two a month. The landlord didn't always get this "key money." If you had a lease on a flat, house, even a single room, you were free to sublet it and sell the "key" for as much as you could get. The "key" to a place of abode had considerable value in times of inflation, since it served as an investment in something tangible.

When inflation ended, however, the Chinese felt encouraged to invest their capital in some profit-making enterprise. This was accelerated

when the Communist authorities began levying land and property taxes. The system of taxation set by the Nationalists had evaporated when the bottom fell out of the Gold Yuan. Fixed tax assessments in Gold Yuan dwindled to infinitesimal values as the Nationalists' currency depreciated. By the time the Reds took over, a property-owner's tax payment in inflated Gold Yuan amounted to a matter of pennies in terms of sterling value.

Taxation By Whim And Guess

In their taxation the Communists went to the other extreme. There seemed to be little rhyme and less reason in the system they set up. Some tax assessments were extraordinarily high, others relatively light. The Catholic Church in Shanghai, for example, was taxed the equivalent of something more than £40,000 for the coming year, and the American School was assessed about £50,000. The Race Club was presented with a tax bill for £143,000. Homes, shops, office buildings, blocks of flats and general property holdings —both foreign- and Chinese-owned—were taxed almost as if by guess and whim. In most cases, property owners were able to persuade the authorities to scale down tax assessments to more reasonable amounts when evidence was presented of true property values and the income derived therefrom. Most of the churches, schools and other non-profit institutions were later exempted altogether from the payment of taxes, or assessed nominal amounts.

Rumours soon spread that a head tax would be levied on all servants, wives and concubines. Other special taxes would be placed on furs, silk frocks, high-heeled shoes and every extra suit in a person's wardrobe. Even though these rumours were vigorously denied by the authorities, people soon began wearing their plainest clothes. Western dress was discarded for the cheaper and less ostentatious Chinese long gown. The market for old and decrepit second-hand cars suddenly increased as the rich hesitated to make too much display of wealth with their late-model limousines.

Indeed, life in Red-reformed Shanghai today is like nothing more than an old-fashioned revival meeting. Someone is always jumping up, with shouts of hallelujah from the crowd, to confess his sins.

THE END

Plenty to buy—but Shanghai fears to display wealth under the Red sentry's watchful eye

The dope about

I came awake reluctantly. I was in a new spot this time. And what a spot!

by LIONEL DAVIDSON

AFTER THE PALPITATING HEAT of the train, the St. Lazare station seemed comparatively cool. The train from Brussels had been an hour late. The customs officers at the frontier had been looking for narcotics. And now, hungry, exhausted with the heat, wretched with the boils under my arms, I was trying to work out where I was going to spend the night.

I had four hundred francs. You couldn't tour Paris looking for an hotel on four hundred francs. It would have to be Ferdy's place. I didn't know how Ferdy was going to like that.

I gave the taxi driver the address, and sank back, and the boils under my arms started throbbing again. Ferdy was going to get a happy little surprise. After a while, I let the window down, and the streets and the smells and the cool air came rushing in out of the failing light.

Sleek, bulky American cars, rackety little French ones, raced by, honking and hooting. The cafés were lit up, newsboys threading their way round the tables, waving the evening papers and shouting *"Scandale des Narcotiques."* The cooling streets were crowded.

We cut up through the boulevard Haussmann to the place de l'Étoile, a vast, darkening estuary, with the pale glimmering lights of the traffic swinging and turning all about us, and turned left at the Arc de Triomphe, out to the west, where Ferdy lived.

Ferdy was the manager of the Paris bureau. He did himself well. In a light-headed moment before I'd left two months ago, he'd given me a key. I rather hoped he wouldn't be in.

The whole thing had been a washout. I'd been trying to persuade Ferdy for a long time to send me on a slow, leisurely trip around Europe, writing up local conditions, getting a few special interviews with the chiefs of state. It was extraordinary just how much of a washout it had been.

For two months, in the sickening heat, I'd been dogged by bad luck. It didn't even look—to other people—like bad luck. To other people my carefully written but (as it turned out) highly fallacious reports must have seemed just dim-witted judgment. Slovakia, I'd said, after a week of careful observation, was quiet and sober. A week later, three ministers were indicted after a ferocious purge. I'd left by then, of course. I'd been in Vienna then, proving conclusively in a long, cabled story that the police had at last taken the measure of the black market. A few days afterwards, a mammoth consignment of penicillin had gone astray, precipitating the biggest police shake-up of the year.

It was uncanny how I'd missed the boat every time. Ferdy's cables had changed from an early tone of mild, almost paternal sarcasm to a peremptory demand for my return. I wasn't looking forward to meeting Ferdy at all.

The taxi pulled up outside the elegant, balconied house. Ferdy had a flat on the first floor. It was a quiet street, the tall houses towering on each side forming a grey, dignified avenue.

The fare should have been two fifty. The driver wanted four hundred. I gave him three, and walked in with my case. It was still warm outside, and there was a curious peachy glow in the sky, reflecting like copper on the buildings. The street was deserted. Even the concierge, who normally sat in the porch of the house, was away, probably cooling off in the garden at the rear.

The stairs seemed endless. It was dark on the landings, and I couldn't find the light switches. But there was no difficulty about finding Ferdy's door. It was directly facing the head of the staircase. I rested the case and rang. I rang again. Then, with relief, I felt for the key.

I let myself in, went through the entrance hall, through a pair of glass doors into the lounge. The windows were shut, the curtains undrawn. It was close and silent in the room, and sombre with the dark orange light of the evening.

There was another pair of glass doors through to the bedroom. I went through, dropped my case, tossed my hat on the bed and flopped out. From the lounge, the flat tock of a clock imposed itself on the heavy, muffled silence.

It was a nicely got up flat, small, but compact and elegant. There was a small passage behind the bedroom leading to a smaller bedroom, the kitchen, and the bathroom. Just enough room, I thought, for one broke and exhausted correspondent. Or, I reflected, possibly ex-correspondent. But I didn't want to think about that part of it just now. I didn't want to think about anything much just now. The sore throbbing began again under my armpits.

I'd picked the boils up in Slovakia. I'd accompanied a batch of Hungarian peasants on a forced journey across the border back to Hungary. The population transfer had been going on for three or four years. There was a rumour that this time the peasants were going to riot. They didn't riot. I didn't get any sort of story at all. All I got was a dose of dysentery and three boils.

JERKING myself out of these gloomy reflections, I got up and went through to the bathroom. I had a shower, and then a shave. I felt a bit better after that, even began singing—until suddenly, I stopped. My voice sounded odd, slightly nightmarish in the heavy silence.

I hadn't put the light on all this time. I don't know why. It had been growing slowly darker, the orange changing to a sort of soft maroon. It was only when I felt blood trickling into my mouth that I realized I'd cut myself. I switched on the light then, and looked around in the medicine chest for a styptic pencil. I didn't find one. The chest seemed to be full of talcum powder and toilet water and packets of shampoo. It didn't strike me as queer, then. Ferdy was finicky about his toilet. He fancied himself as a bit of a boulevardier.

I went to my case and found a clean shirt, and slipped it on loosely over my trousers. Then I went back into the bathroom and switched the light off. It was making me fidgety, nervous almost. It was a queer sensation. I didn't try to analyse it. The heavy, breathless silence of the flat set my nerves on edge.

In the bedroom, I opened the casement windows and stepped out on to the balcony. It was cooler than inside the room, but still heavy. Big, dark clouds were lumping over. There was going to be a storm. Down in the street, there was not a soul in sight. It seemed curiously remote, out of perspective somehow, as though I were seeing it from a quite different angle than ever before—some trick, perhaps, of the changing light.

I went back into the room, and through the kitchen to find some food. There was half a chicken in the frig, and part of a bottle of white

Marie

wine. I took them into the bedroom and ate slowly, standing up, looking out of the window.

It began to rain, slow, heavy drops at first, then, at the first warm gust of wind, faster and heavier, until it was bouncing and splashing off the road.

I finished off the wine, lying down on the bed, watching the lightning crackle across the sky, and listening to the thunder. I put the bottle down by the side of the bed. I felt fine now, relaxed, clean, gently aglow with the wine.

I remember getting up to shut the window when the stiffening wind began to blow the rain in, and lying down again, and then I must have dozed off almost immediately.

The next thing I knew was coming gently awake to a number of small, familiar sounds, the sounds of doors opening, shoes being slipped off, the rustle of clothing. I came awake reluctantly, groping in my mind to place where I was. In an hotel room in Vienna? Prague? Brussels? Had I a train to catch? Someone to see? Then it came to me. I leaned up on one elbow. The room was dreadfully close, and perspiration was standing out on my face. A light shone through the glass doors from the next room. So Ferdy was back.

I STAYED like that for a minute, leaning on one arm, licking my lips, working it out; then got up and walked over to the door. With my hand on the handle, I remembered my shirt was still out of my trousers. I must have looked a mess. I wiped my face with a handkerchief and then, tucking in my shirt, I looked through the glass of the door, and stopped, petrified.

It wasn't Ferdy. It wasn't anyone like Ferdy. It was a girl, a very pretty girl. For a moment I stood stock still, feeling little bubbles of panic start to swell inside. Ferdy wasn't married. . . . But wait, wait a minute, work this out slowly.

I was still stunned with sleep. What was I panicking about? Ferdy had brought the girl home with him. Maybe he was putting his car away and he'd given her the key to come up and wait for him. What of it?

The girl was sitting on a chair, her legs crossed, her shoes off, writing in a notebook. Occasionally she looked up, right at me, without seeing me in the dark room, working something out, then continued writing. She was concentrating hard, frowning a little from time to time. She didn't *look* as if she were waiting. She looked as if she lived here.

The hairs on the back of my neck started to tingle. Something was wrong here. I'd booped again. I'd made some idiotic blunder. I had to get out of it. If the girl saw me, there'd be no time for explanations. She'd start screaming blue murder. And it wasn't growing any earlier. At some point, quite soon, she'd be coming through to the bedroom.

I stood there in an agony of indecision, when suddenly, the girl stood up and walked towards me. I shot back against the wall. She switched on the light and walked through. I could smell her perfume as she passed. She went into the bathroom, and as soon as she'd gone I noticed my shoes. One was by the bed, the other had tumbled into the middle of the room when I kicked it off. I don't know how she missed seeing them.

I prayed she would stay in the bathroom for a few minutes so that I could pick up the shoes and my case and pad into the hall and out of the flat, but she returned almost immediately. There was nothing I could do about it.

I don't know who got the biggest fright, she or

I stood stock still. It wasn't Ferdy. It was a girl. And she looked as if she lived here

ILLUSTRATED BY SHOWELL

I. She was speechless. The colour drained from her face, her hand went up to her throat and she gave a sort of gasp.

I said, in French: "I'm sorry, ma'mselle. I didn't mean to frighten you. I can explain everything." I was still standing up against the wall, my hands still idiotically in the waistband of my trousers.

She opened her mouth. I took a step forward, scared that she might start screaming, and said: "Please, ma'mselle, don't be alarmed. There is nothing to be afraid of."

She laughed. It was a slightly hysterical laugh, but still a laugh.

She said: "Did you have to do that? You scared me rigid."

I said: "I'm sorry. I didn't hear you come in. I was asleep. You see——"

"Never mind. It's over now. Phew!" She laughed again, a little shakily, but the colour was returning to her face. She put her hand on my arm. "Come through into the room and have a drink, for God's sake."

She didn't wait for an answer. I followed her dumbly into the lounge.

She said: "Have you been here long? It never occurred to me you were in there all the time."

I said: "I'm sorry. I can't apologize enough about the whole thing. It's so damn silly."

She was getting out glasses, calm and self-possessed. I wondered what it was all about. For a moment, I suspected it was part of a dream. I'd wake up in a minute, with flies crawling over me, in Jugoslavia.

"There's some whisky if you'd like that." She looked at me. "You're English, aren't you?" Then she stopped me before I could answer. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have asked that. Just idle curiosity, and that's dangerous, isn't it?"

I scratched my head. The whisky, at least, looked real enough. "Whisky would be fine, thank you, ma'mselle."

"Marie," she said. "You can call me Marie. What shall I call you?"

I said: "My name's Hector."

She seemed to think it funny. She poured out the whisky, took Chartreuse for herself, and clinked glasses.

"Cherryo," she said. "That's what you say, isn't it? Never mind. *A bientôt.*"

"Cheerio."

I took it down at a gulp, and looked at her again. She was still there. She hadn't vanished. I wasn't asleep anywhere, and this was no dream. I was right here in Paris, in Ferdy's flat, wondering what the hell it was all about. Or was it Ferdy's flat? *Was* it Ferdy's flat?

She was getting cigarettes. I took a quick look round. The baby grand piano, the curtains, the suite of furniture, the radio: if it wasn't Ferdy's flat I was a Dutchman!

SHE gave me a cigarette, and lit it, and draped herself round the piano, looking at me. Something seemed to be expected. I said: "You expected me, then?"

She said: "Of course. My instructions were that you would be here today or tomorrow. Nobody mentioned tonight, though."

I thought it was about time we started clearing things up. She didn't look hysterical. I took a deep pull of the cigarette and said: "Look, Marie, there seems to be something of a misunderstanding here. I came here to find a friend. I went to sleep in the next room and you woke me up. I never expected to find you here. Quite frankly, I haven't the faintest idea who you are, or who you think I am. It's all a mistake. But," I added, taking another look at her, "I am perfectly willing to be persuaded that I am indeed a welcome and expected guest."

I said the last bit quickly, as a sort of joke. As I was speaking, her face had shown a certain amount of incomprehension, and even alarm. But the last bit brought a subtle change. For a moment, she looked petulant, then she gave a tight little smile, and said: "Oho, so I am not to be trusted, is that it?" She looked at me coolly. "I do not like these sort of games, 'Ector. Please

"There she is, ladies and gents —the most gigantic, romantic, beautiful ship in the world"

tell Oscar I will not be trailed and trapped and spied on." She stamped her foot and angrily threw her cigarette away.

I said: "I'm sure you've got this all wrong. Nobody is spying on you."

She interrupted angrily: "Enough, I tell you. I do not like this sort of thing." Her fingers were clenching and unclenching spasmodically. She had gone quite white again. I thought she might be going to have a fit. There was a curious look on her face, as though she were fighting to keep control of herself.

I said quickly: "I'm sorry, Marie. All right, let's drop it. What about another drink?"

Little tremors were going up and down my spine. I had to get out of here. I couldn't for the life of me understand what it was all about, but I had to get out of it.

She gave me another whisky, and as I took it, something occurred to me. I said: "Look, Marie, don't get angry again. I've been away for a couple of months and I'm not quite sure of the set-up. Tell me, what happened to the man who was here in this flat before? Are you a new tenant?"

"A new tenant?" she laughed. "Yes, three weeks, four weeks. The Fox left. Don't ask me where he's gone. Who knows?"

The Fox. It seemed a bit personal, but not inappropriate. That, at least, explained one thing. It didn't explain the rest, though. And with the second whisky, my spine stopped tingling and my bump of curiosity began to itch. It wasn't any of my business whom she was expecting, but a lot of things weren't any of my business. I sat down on the sofa, and patted the seat next to me.

She sat down. "They make me so sick with their nasty little tricks. Would I be here waiting for you if I were not playing on the square? They enrage me. But enough of that."

I said: "All right, enough of that. What do you want me to do?"

She said: "You can stay here tonight if you wish. What are your plans?"

"I don't know," I said honestly.

"Well, stay if you want to. I suppose you'll want to see the stuff. The figures and accounts you can look at later." She got up off the sofa. "It's in the bedroom."

My head buzzing with a suspicion, vague at first, then more urgent and sure, I followed her. In the bedroom, she stopped and said: "It is so close in here. The window is shut."

She opened it, and we stepped out on the balcony, and in that moment everything clicked neatly, almost audibly, into place.

I said: "Cripes!"

"*Pardon?*"

"It is so dark. There is no moon."

"Ah, yes."

But dark and moonless as it was, I could see the road. And the road was two floors down. I remembered how, earlier, the perspective had seemed wrong. I'd been tired then, prepared to believe my eyes were playing me tricks. But there had been nothing wrong with my eyes. We were on the second floor. In the flat below, no doubt, Ferdy was at this moment taking in a little beauty sleep.

I didn't know how I'd made the mistake, or why the flats were furnished alike, or even why the same key fitted both locks. But it was plain that all these things were so, and that here, without planning, without any effort on my part—indeed, almost against my will—I'd fallen into a ripe and juicy little humdinger of a story that promised to make up for two months, two years, two centuries of bad luck. The *Scandale des Narcotiques*, I was positive now, had opened its heart to me.

WE went inside. She opened the wardrobe and took out a black leather brief case, rested it on the bed and opened it.

"Cocaine," she said. "In the new wrapping. Things are getting so warm that Claud thought this up. It is intelligent, eh?"

I blinked. The brief case was full of packets of shampoo. Or so it said on the packets, the same packets that I'd seen in the medicine chest in the bathroom. The memory of that seemed to explain the girl's sudden rage, the way she kept tight hold of herself. I had a hunch she used that sort of shampoo herself.

I wanted to get hold of the stuff and the papers, and my bag, and hop it. But there was a lot I wanted to learn yet, and by the time I'd learned it, it was four o'clock in the morning. It was a cosy evening. In the end, I thought I might as well stay there. It was going to look odd rushing off at that hour, anyway.

I slept in the small bedroom. Surprisingly, I did sleep. I awoke abruptly at eight, in a panic. It had suddenly occurred to me that the fellow she was expecting might show up early. I washed and dressed in a hurry. Marie must have heard the noise. She came in as I was knotting my tie.

"You are in a great hurry. Where are you going?"

I said: "No questions, Marie," and slapped her behind. I thought it was rather a pity about Marie. She was quite cute. She said: "But are you not having breakfast? I thought you all ate big meals at breakfast?"

"Not me," I said. I slipped on my jacket, strapped up my case. "No naughty questions now, Marie. You know the rules."

I kissed her fondly, and she seemed rather pleased about it. Then I beat it.

As it turned out, I wasn't a moment too early. Coming down the stairs with my bag, I passed a man going up. He glanced curiously at me, and, as I passed Ferdy's door, and went round the bend in the staircase, I felt his eyes still on me. I thought quickly, and kept moving until I heard him stop at Marie's door and ring. When he went in, I pelted quietly and desperately up the stairs again, felt for the key, and let myself into Ferdy's flat.

Then I stood, panting, inside the door and waited. Ferdy wouldn't be in, I knew that. However late he'd been up the night before, he'd be in at the office at eight prompt, reading the papers, snipping out the reports our own correspondents had missed.

I didn't have to wait long. Feet came thundering down the stairs, a man's feet. A couple of minutes later, they were tearing back up again, and after a lot of stamping around up above, two pairs of feet came down in a hurry.

I WENT through to the lounge. It was incredible. The suite of furniture, the grand piano, the radio: all the flats in the building must be furnished alike. I stood at the window and looked through the side of the curtains. Marie and the man on the stairs didn't waste much time. I saw them jump into a car, made a note of the number, and rang up the *Sûreté*.

Then I called for a car myself, and went to the office; and with me went the brief case.

My welcome wasn't exactly a joyous one, but I thought I could bear it.

Ferdy said: "Oh, so you decided to come back to us. And how, may I ask, have you enjoyed your trip? I see by the papers quite a lot has been going on out there."

I said: "Mustn't grumble, Ferdy, mustn't grumble at all. The weather was warm, but——"

Ferdy let himself go. He'd been saving it for a long time. I sat back to enjoy it. "In short," he ended. "you seem to have missed every story that was right under your nose. Well, let's have your version."

I said: "The trouble with you, Ferdy, is that the best stories are right over your head. How are you getting on with the narcotics story? Got a lead yet?"

A haunted look came in his eye. It didn't need second sight to see that London and New York had been worrying him about it. He said: "Let's stick to your business, shall we? Or," he corrected himself, "what *was* your business."

I said: "Ferdy, do you know a girl called Marie?"

He said, sweetly reasonable: "May I ask if this is to do with a story?"

"You may, Ferdy. You may well. It is a peach of a story. I have the dope right here."

"All right," he said. "Let's see it. I can guess just how wonderful it is."

I said: "Oh no you can't, Ferdy," and lifted the brief case carefully on to the desk. "Oh no you can't."

THE END

My child was born a cripple

by JOAN THORNE

Only a miracle could cure her, they said. Then one day I heard her cry: "Mummy, I can walk!"

"MUMMY, WHY DID GOD make me crippled?" Caroll used to ask me, watching her brother and sister playing in the garden. It was hard to make a child of seven understand that God, who had fashioned her legs so that she could not stand, was also a kind and merciful God. "Darling," I'd say, "if you're a good girl, maybe one day He will let you stand and walk like other children."

So Caroll prayed every night for what the doctors said would have been a miracle. She had been born with the tendons above her heels foreshortened, so that it was impossible for her to stand naturally with her ankles bent and her heels resting on the ground; the effect was as if she were always on tiptoes. She couldn't stand still without support. She couldn't walk, but she could run full tilt. Caroll had grown up like this, with the result that the sinews had become tight, right up into her little thighs. She never used crutches; her only means of independent travel was by crawling on all fours.

Caroll went to school across the road. I would take her there in the morning, and fetch her home when class was over. I dressed her normally and treated her no differently from the two younger ones, Sylvia and Harold, save that Caroll wore boots, which she hated.

She was an average pupil with a flair for mathematics and she did consistently well at Sunday school, winning a prize every year since she was two. Cripples are usually good at class work, having more time to study, but Caroll never passed her playtime with her books. She'd watch the other children playing from the window, sometimes screaming with them as if she were living mentally in the game. She'd back a friend, cheering her on, so that the friend's victory would be Caroll's; they'd share a defeat, too.

There was no playtime for Caroll. She had to watch the other children from the window

"Like A Ballet Dancer"

Naturally, being crippled has affected her whole personality. She's tender, gentle, thoughtful—a home-loving girl. I couldn't very well teach her to cook, because I was afraid to let her go too near the oven; but she'd help me making the beds; she'd mind the younger ones; she'd sew, darn, polish the silver and go about the living-room dusting the furniture, like a ballet dancer, daintily on her pointed toes. She's a tidy child; her toys are always put away carefully when she's finished with them, and her clothes cupboard is an example even to her elders.

We had done our best for Caroll. Doctors had pronounced her a cripple for life, without any apparent medical reason for why it should have been so, because I was perfectly healthy and happy before she came. She was a difficult birth on March 30, 1942, a premature baby born with jaundice and weighing 2 lb. 8 oz.; as the midwife said, her legs had come out black and bloodless. Nobody really expected her to live; she had to be bathed in olive oil, and for six months practically all she wore was cotton wool. At twelve months she was just about large enough to wear the baby clothes of the size an expectant mother knits for a layette.

My husband and I never suspected there was anything wrong with her legs until she tried to walk at about twenty months. It seemed strange that she could only stand on tiptoe, so we took her to an orthopaedic clinic. She was a cripple, they said, and ordered iron splints for her to wear in bed as a means of correcting the fault. As the splints didn't help in the least, we took her to see an orthopaedic surgeon.

"I don't think there is anything that can be done for the child," was the verdict of the first doctor. "The iron splints might help, but she'll never be able to get her heels on the ground."

I refused to take that as the last word, but I had to accept the fact that Caroll was to be crippled all her life when a dozen other doctors repeated the verdict. There was nothing we could do for her, except perhaps to put some money away each week and give her a better education than we can afford for the others.

The Case Was Reopened

That was the position when I read Dr. Harvey Graham's article, "Baby Will Be Fit After All," in JOHN BULL on July 2, 1949. In it he discussed operations on shortened muscles and tendons. "The treatment is difficult and may take years in the worst cases," he wrote, "but the results are worth while."

I took the article to Caroll's doctor and told him I'd like her case reopened. He gave me a letter to Sir Harry Platt in Manchester. In August Sir Harry examined Caroll and said he could bring her heels down by surgery.

Four weeks to that day she was sent for to go into Biddulph Grange Orthopaedic Hospital at Stoke-on-Trent. Sir Harry Platt operated on one leg, and on the other fourteen days later. They put walking plasters on and started her off walking with the plasters. Those were taken off and she wore splints in bed. When those were removed she was taught to stand, and to walk in front of a mirror so that she could see how she

was progressing. It was slow work, but they were kind and patient, and Caroll was as good as gold.

They let her come home the last week in March. The ambulance had to bring her to Manchester, to meet me outside the station. The driver got out, opened the door at the back. The nurse jumped down and Caroll was there, sitting up on the stretcher. They helped her down, and left her standing on the ground. I couldn't speak; just her standing like that was a miracle. Then she came towards me, limping slightly, with her arms stretched out for me and her eyes shining. I took her in my arms and hugged her; I was crying in front of everybody.

"Mummy, look, I can walk," she said. "I must be good because God made me walk."

"Darling," I said, "there was never a child as good as you." And hugged her again.

It took us two hours to walk up the short road from the station to our home in Adlinton; Caroll could have done it in no time, but her friends were there to meet her, and she was stopped along the way and laden with chocolates, sweets and money.

I think Caroll's greatest thrill was when she wore shoes for the first time, instead of the boots she hated so much. She goes to school on her own now, and she's as active as any of her playmates during recess. She has joined the Brownies, and on a Sunday afternoon she might take the other two children for a picnic in the woods.

Once a month she has to go to the Chorley Orthopaedic Clinic for massage treatment; the tendons still need to be loosened and strengthened. She has a slight limp, but that, the doctor says, is to be expected and will gradually disappear.

Talking to other mothers at the clinic, I know now how lucky we have been with Caroll. Her case has taken some months, but in only a few months more she should be completely normal. Often mothers have been bringing their crippled children to the clinic for much longer. Caroll only had the two operations, one on each leg. For some crippled children many more operations may be needed and the exercises and massage and training may have to go on for years. But all the worry and all the years of patience are worth it.

There are very few crippled children who cannot be helped as Caroll was, particularly if the right treatment is started early enough. Through the whole of this experience my respect for doctors and nurses and physiotherapists at the clinics and hospitals has increased enormously. But when I tried to tell one of the nurses that and say some sort of "Thank you," she laughed at me.

"With children," she said, "doctors and nurses can do a great deal. But before they can hope for success they must be supported by a great deal of faith and a great deal of patience. Children have little patience and not much faith. Mothers and fathers have to supply that — and they should take their share of the credit."

Caroll has been watching me struggle to write all this, in the intervals of shopping, cooking, cleaning and bedmaking and so on. "Mummy," she promised, "when I can walk like all other girls, I will do all the shopping and cooking, and you can sit down all day."

But her greatest ambition is to ride a bicycle. When she was at Biddulph one of the nurses took her to the wishing well. Afterwards Caroll told us: "I wished for a pair of wings, so that when I went to school my feet wouldn't ache. But if I can't have wings, I said, a bicycle will do." We are saving up to buy her one. THE END

ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE

Continued from page 9

American spirit which so many of us had met during the war. Although their expedition had more of everything, our essential sledging equipment was of a higher quality, ours were better sledges, and our tent fabrics turned out to be more reliable.

A week after the arrival of the Americans, *Trepassey* and *Fitzroy* turned up again one morning with the Governor of the Falkland Islands, more stores, some much-needed skis for "Ice-Cold Katy," the Auster, and a tall, hefty Yorkshireman. This was Terry Randall, aged nineteen, the new radio operator, an enthusiastic jazz lover and possessor of a great bushy red beard.

May 1 was my twenty-first birthday. Kevin Walton and John Tonkin made a very fine iced cake with twenty-one candles, and we had a party in the hut. It was a party that really brought us and the Americans together—on Midwinter Day, June 21—after living for three months within 200 yards of each other as rather stiffly polite neighbours. After that our relations became more cordial; there was much reciprocal party giving, with cinema shows in their hut and a liberal spirit allowance from the Colonial Office in ours. Like their Navy, the American expedition was bone dry.

Depot Laid Half-way

Bad weather conditions had frustrated Tonkin's attempt to find a route over the plateau into the Weddell Sea area, but in August we decided with the Americans to establish a joint met. station on the plateau for high altitude observations. The operation required that an advance party should go up part of the way, lay a depot of food and stores for the final party to pick up on its way to the site selected 5,000 feet up. This was done and two Americans were left there to make weather notes and wait for the others, who were due to follow a week or so later. But the weather worsened, the Americans lost radio contact with the base and their tent tore in the wind. They decided to come down the glacier alone, disregarding their leader's strict orders to the contrary.

Had Dodson and Peterson listened to Finn's instructions about glacial travel they would have been roped together or on skis. They were not roped and Peterson took his skis off, lugged them over his shoulder and continued walking through the snow.

Peterson did not go very far before the snow suddenly collapsed under him and he disappeared. Dodson made for the base as fast as he could. It was late evening and we were watching a film in the American hut when he arrived with the story of what had happened. The lights came on and word passed round in a tense whisper, "Pete's down a crevasse." Ken Butler and John Tonkin withdrew to Finn Ronne's cabin and there Ken told him, "Our dog teams are at your disposal."

We were hitched up and ready to move off in half an hour. Butler led the combined rescue party, with Dodson pointing out the way he had come down the glacier. Peterson was born lucky. There was brilliant moonlight to show the way, otherwise the journey could not have been attempted at night. It had stopped snowing. Dodson's ski tracks were still visible and these led to a hole in the crevasse with a pair of skis lying in the snow nearby.

Chipped From The Ice

Pete had fallen 130 feet and was wedged upsidedown in a narrow part of the crevasse. Doc Butson went down with a first-aid kit, chipped Pete out, hitched a rope round his waist and shouted: "Okay, start hauling!" Pete had been down about thirteen hours. By the time he arrived at the top of the crevasse a tent had been put up and warmed with a Primus stove. Pete was tucked inside in a sleeping bag, with a shot in the arm and a mug of hot pemmican. Then, after he had thawed out a little, he was loaded on to a sledge and driven back the ten miles to base. He was frost bitten and bruised, but no bones were broken. Butson received an Albert Medal for his part in the rescue.

Unusually for August, we had some fine clear days, ideal for flying, and Tommy Thomson and I would take Ice-Cold Katy on recce flights over the plateau, looking for a possible route over the glaciers to the west. The difficulty of our position in Marguerite Bay was caused by the plateau which lay above and behind us.

The obvious course was to fly the heavy stuff over the top of the plateau in advance, then climb and cross with light sledges, pick stores up from the depot and carry on. So in September we agreed with the Americans to establish a depot at Cape Keeler, about a hundred miles flying to the south-east. The plan was for our Auster to fly over first and flag out a suitable landing strip in the ice for the heavier American plane to land on the ice with a load.

On September 14 three of us took off in the Auster early in the afternoon—

In all weathers, Stonehouse had to take daily readings from met. screen

Tommy as pilot, myself as co-pilot and Reg Freeman to survey.

We made Cape Keeler in good time, picked up what looked to be an ideal landing strip on the Larsen Shelf Ice, landed and marked it out with trail flags. We produced sandwiches and flasks of steaming-hot cocoa, and to keep warm after that we played football with the rolled-up sandwich bag until we sighted the American plane and let off a smoke flare to attract their attention. They did not see us and continued flying southwards. We waited, expecting they would come back, but when the sun went down and the weather began closing in we decided to return to base.

We were soon flying against clouds of drift snow blown down off the plateau, and it became apparent that we would not be able to continue directly over the plateau in the face of a rising headwind. We turned slightly south-west, down a feature known as the Trough, which we thought would afford more shelter. But again we met the headwind, this time loaded with mist, obliterating the landmarks we needed to identify our position.

Flying was rough and our light aircraft seemed to be trying to stand on her head. Ragged, inhospitable peaks loomed out of the mist and disappeared uncomfortably near to our wing tips.

The plateau finally disappeared beneath us, and that meant we were now west of it, approaching the sea-ice. Our best course would be to continue out to sea and turn and head towards home on a north-easterly tack. It was a relief to be clear of the plateau, but other troubles were beginning: the engine had started coughing. "Carburettor icing—it's this bloody snowstorm," Tommy shouted.

"We're losing height," I said cheerfully and obviously as I looked out of the window. "I can see the sea-ice." It was barely a hundred feet below.

"I'm going to land. Tell Reg to brace himself."

I Hit The Cabin Roof

Tommy made a good landing, in a blinding flurry of snow. Ice-Cold Katy hit a bergy bit, bounced up into the air and came down with a crash, breaking a ski and digging in on her nose. In a shower of splintering Perspex and wood she crumpled, turned over and lay still. I pulled the pin of my safety harness and fell with a crack on to the roof of the cabin. We were out in a second, hauling Reg from the back seat and dragging out the safety equipment.

We were lucky—the aircraft was wrecked, but we were barely scratched. Nothing could be done about Katy. She was a complete write-off, and a few months later, when the ice melted, she sank.

"Better contact base, tell them what's happened," Tommy said.

I had hauled the radio out of Ice-Cold Katy, whose sheer lines were rapidly acquiring a middle-aged spread of snow, pushed up an aerial and tried to get through. Our transmitter was broken, but I could hear the plateau met. station calling base, inquiring about us, and Terry's worried voice: "Nothing heard of you—I am keeping a continuous watch on sixty-four megacycles—come up on the hour." Our set remained impotently dumb.

It was getting on for seven o'clock. Darkness was cloaking in over us and snow was falling heavily. Even if we had made contact with base we could not have told them where to look for us. Our position, we guessed, was somewhere between fifty and a hundred miles from Stonington Island and probably to the south of the base. But we were on insecure sea-ice and the wind was rising.

NEXT WEEK: We're rescued—and I leave base to live in Penguin Land

Johnny's wife Josie hates boxing. But she watches his training and is always at his fights

Boxer in search of a punch

by EDWARD HOGARTH

Johnny Williams, the heavyweight from Wales, has what it takes to make a champion. All he needs is a killing right

ON THE KITCHEN DOOR of the Lawrence Sheriffe Arms, Rugby, hang four enormous sixteeen-ounce boxing gloves. They belong to Johnny Williams, the young heavyweight "hope" who may one day be the champion of Britain. "Johnny doesn't seem to realize how important he is," says "Drummer" Hartin, the licensee. "He's quite unspoiled by success."

Johnny still belongs to the Drummer Hartin School of Boxing, sparring with the local boys, skipping, punching and shadow-boxing and going on cross-country runs with ex-featherweight Hartin cycling at his side. "Very light on his feet is Johnny," says Mrs. Hartin. "He's as soft-footed as a cat. He weighs thirteen stone eight but we can scarcely hear him down below. Different from the Grunt-and-Groan Judo boys. When they get up in the gym, you'd think they were coming through the floor."

Johnny is a close friend of many ex-boxer publicans in Rugby and he likes nothing better than to listen to their tales of past triumphs in the ring. But he himself is a strict teetotaller. He'll stand in the corridor outside the Smoke Room of the Sheriffe and cool down with a glass of lemonade, but he won't set foot inside the bar.

Born on a mountain farm a few miles from Barmouth, on Christmas Day, 1926, Johnny came to Rugby at the age of three. His grandfather took a farm at Newton and Johnny's father helped him to run it. "We brought Wales with us. At home we always spoke Welsh," says Johnny. "My Gran used to give it to us if she caught us speaking English."

There is no boxing history in the family. There is nothing to account for Johnny's astonishing skill. The family was, in fact, strongly opposed to a fighting career. When he was a lad of ten, boxing at Murray Boys' School, they tried to set him against it. They were not keen on his selling programmes at local contests in the Co-op Hall and they had plenty to say when he went into the ring and fought for half a crown a time. There was a fine old row when they discovered that he had won thirty shillings in a fairground booth by lasting out for six rounds against a Negro.

Threat To A Handsome Face

But it is one thing to have a grandson who neglects his hedgecutting and ploughing in order to bike over to Leamington and practise boxing with the three Turpin brothers, and quite another to have a grandson who has flown to South Africa and has beaten several Continental champions. At first, they did not like Johnny mixing in the strange world of "sporting" people, heavy drinkers, some of them, but so far he has come to no harm. They were afraid that his big handsome face would be battered out of recognition. Until his fight with Pat Comiskey, it was entirely unmarked. He is so quick on his feet that he is a very difficult man to hit. Even his hands show no sign of injury. The knuckles are unswollen and the veins scarcely visible.

"I got my hands strong doing farm work as a child," says Johnny. "Milking developed my wrists and forearms. Pitching hay broadened my chest and shoulders." Farm work is grand exercise for a boxer, especially milking and log sawing, but Johnny doesn't pick his jobs. He does anything—driving the tractor, hedge cutting, harvesting. At the moment, his chief interest lies in 200 White Leghorns. They are the start of his own poultry farm.

It is a fine sight to watch Johnny in the ring in the autumn, after days in the open air stripped to the waist, cutting and carrying corn. He makes his pale opponents look as if they have just got up from a sickbed. Johnny is no croucher. With his upright stance and hard-hitting left, he might have stepped out of an old sporting print of the Jem Mace era. A quiet, serious, sensible boy, he lives and dreams boxing.

Up at the Lawrence Sheriffe Arms gymnasium, he gives the Rugby boys an imitation of a Mills left hook and a Mills deadly short over-arm right. He shows them a Driscoll chop, a Woodcock straight right. Sometimes he shows them a Joe Louis short right, following a jabbing left hook. And across the road the little girl who lives above the butcher's shop watches with her eyes glued to the window.

Mills Was The Wedding Star

There was great excitement in Rugby last September, when Johnny was married to a pretty nineteen-year-old girl named Jocelyn. It was a gala day. The parish church was packed to the doors. The streets round the Clock Tower were crowded with sightseers. But the bride with the long golden curls and the bouquet of red carnations was not the centre of attraction. Neither was the husky bridegroom with his big blue eyes and crinkly black hair. The thunder was stolen by one of the guests—Freddie Mills himself. He stood smiling in the porch, beetle-browed, his hair growing in sideboards, wearing a remarkable tie and an expensive suit with massive shoulders.

"Freddie is a great showman," says Johnny. "I wish I had half his personality. When I was with him in South Africa, we used to demonstrate boxing moves on the stage, and afterwards he could put on a marvellous one-man show, making up jokes, clowning and singing popular songs. He kept everybody happy."

After sparring with Mills in South Africa, Johnny stayed on for another six months to fatten up on good food and good South African sun. He put on a stone and a half and was able

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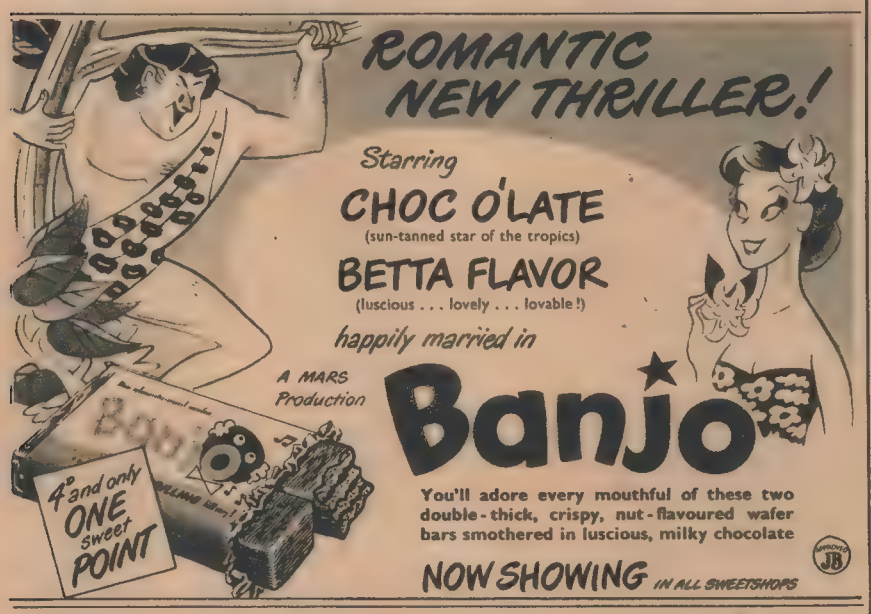
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to act as sparring partner to Bruce Woodcock when he, too, went south. This summer, he again helped Bruce at Castle-Gwrych, Abergele. "The worst part of a fight is the training beforehand," he says. "It's far more gruelling than the actual battle."

"He's a wonderful lad to train," is the opinion of his manag , Ted Broadribb. "He does exactly what I say. He listens to everything I tell him." It was a Rugby man, Joe Whittaker, an ex-fight promoter, who put Johnny in touch with Broadribb. He knew that the manager could be trusted not to exploit Johnny's youth and inexperience. Ted was busy when Johnny arrived. He was in his bath. So Johnny went into Solomons's gym, got changed and went through his paces. In a few seconds, Nat Sellars the trainer was phoning through to the manager. "Come on round quick, Ted. This kid's got the stuff."

Ted, having dressed hastily, took one look at Johnny's magnificent frame and beautiful action and made up his mind at once. "Take him on," he said, grinning from ear to ear. "He's a natural." Johnny was then a lean gangling lad in his teens weighing only eleven stones four pounds but he was six feet tall with a reach of seventy-six inches.

"We'll make a heavyweight of him," said Ted. "We'll turn him into a world beater." Broadribb has brought the boy along slowly and carefully. He has developed Johnny as a defensive boxer, cunning in ringcraft, one of the fastest men in the whole of boxing history.

Long String Of Victories

Johnny scored two big successes in South Africa, when he outpointed the South African light heavyweight champion, Fred Vorster, and stopped Nick Wolmarans in four rounds. In 1949, thanks to the good food and sunny climate down south, he stepped into the heavyweight class, beating the Scottish heavyweight champion, Ken Shaw, with a technical knockout. At the White City, he beat the Swede Nisse Andersson. At Birmingham, he outclassed and defeated the Irish champion, Paddy Slavin, in three rounds.

Over in Porthcawl, Johnny won on points against the Belgian champion, Piet Wilde, nearly three stones heavier. Back at Harringay he outboxed the French champion, Stephan Olek. At Birmingham, he beat the Jamaican Lloyd Barnett on points and at Harringay he again won on points against the heavyweight champion of Canada, Vern Escoe. Matched against Pat Comiskey on the Woodcock-Savold bill, he took his first real punishment, but pleased the critics by his skill and courage.

Slowly, with infinite patience, Ted Broadribb is taking him up the ladder. Johnny Williams is a scientific boxer. He is not a crowd-pleaser. He is not content to stand toe to toe and slug it out. He never gets ruffled, never gets mad, never loses command of himself. "Johnny hasn't got the killer instinct," remarks his wife, Josie, laughing. "It doesn't seem to worry him." All the same, he has been in more than fifty fights and until the Comiskey defeat had lost only two, and those two defeats on points he reversed within a few months.

"Johnny's best punch is his straight left," says Josie. "The boxing experts say that he wins with his left, his footwork and his right cross." Too modest to admit that he has any out-of-the-ordinary blows, he is inclined to forget his stinging left and to tell you how keen he is to develop a killing straight right. "Once he has mastered it," observes omniscient Drummer Hartin. "There won't be a heavyweight champion in the world who can lick him."

Maybe, when Johnny has acquired a devastating right—and from the state of Drummer's punchballs it won't be long—he will not hesitate to give the final K.O. and send the crowd into raptures. At the moment, he seems reluctant to finish his man off. Something holds him back.

No Time For Glamour Girls

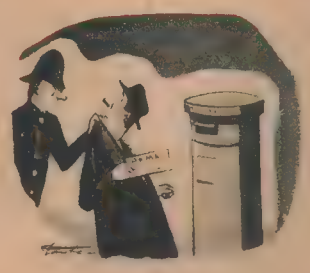
He has scathing cracks to make about the glamour girls who attend big fights. "They don't understand the fundamentals of boxing, let alone the finer points," he says. "They only go to see a kill." But he can't persuade Josie to keep away, although she hates the game. "I'd feel worse if I stayed at home," she says.

When Johnny ducks under the ropes at the start of a public contest, he wears a white towelling dressing-gown embroidered with the initials J.J.W. "John Jones Williams," he explains. "In Wales we like to use our mother's maiden name." Nearly all his relatives bear the name of Jones or Williams. The women on his father's side all marry men of the Williams fraternity, the women on his mother's side marry Joneses. If you look up Johnny's flat in the Rugby directory, you find that the householder of 91 Newbold Road is a Mr. T. Williams. It is not Johnny but his brother-in-law in the flat below. Yes, his sister married another Williams.

But there is only one Johnny. "He'll go further than Mills or Tommy Farr," says his manager. "There's no stopping him," says Drummer Hartin enthusiastically. "He won't merely be Champion of Britain, he'll be Champion of the World."

THE END

NOW YOU KNOW



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We sat on the veranda, and Jean said: "You're practically retired now, Noel. Why not give up London, and stay with us?" I was very touched

A TOWN LIKE ALICE

by NEVIL SHUTE

ILLUSTRATED BY MACKINLAY

THE EPILOGUE . . . The dream that started with a love affair now blossomed into a modern miracle

WHEN JEAN PAGET LEFT England in 1948, I had no idea that she would never return. As family solicitor, I am trustee of the legacy of £53,000 left to Jean by her uncle, and I saw her off. She went to Malaya, where she wished to build a well for villagers who had helped her during the war.

While a prisoner of the Japs, she had met Joe Harman, Australian p.o.w., who, later, had been brutally treated for stealing food for her. She thought him dead, but in Malaya she heard he had recovered from the torture, and she promptly went to Australia to find him.

At the same time, Harman travelled to London in search of her, and by the time they were reunited in Australia, Jean had ample chance to find out what the outback town of Willstown (near Harman's cattle station) was like. It was dead. Girls lost no time in leaving home for the cities, and the young stockriders were growing embittered.

Jean saw that, to revive it—to keep the girls at home and encourage marriage—some light industry must be set up and shops started. Willstown, she promised herself, must become a real town—a town like Alice Springs, the garden city of Central Australia.

She started by opening a workshop to produce leather goods from local skins, then a milk bar. She promised Harman she would marry him in six months, after the businesses had got going. She had found her life's work—building a family, and a town.

* * *

JEAN married Joe Harman in April after the mustering, as she had promised him. They were married by a travelling Church of England priest. There was, of course, no church in Willstown at that time, though one is to be built next year; they were married in the Shire Hall, and all the countryside came to the wedding. They had their honeymoon, or part of it, on Green Island, and I suppose she took her sarong with her, though she did not tell me that.

In the first two years of her married life she made considerable inroads into her capital. She was very good about it; she always started off on one thing and got it trading smoothly before starting on another, after the first effort when she started both the milk bar and the workshop together. She used to send me accounts of her ventures, too, prepared for her by a young man called Len James who worked in the bank. But all the same, she asked me for three or four thousand pounds every six months or so, till by the time her second son was born, the one that she called Noel after me, she had had over eighteen thousand pounds for her various local businesses. Although they all seemed to be making profits, Lester and I were growing, by that time, a little concerned about our duty as trustees, broad though our terms of reference under the Macfadden will might be. Our duty was to keep her capital intact and hand it over to her when she was thirty-five, and I began to worry sometimes about the chances of a slump or some unknown disaster in Australia which would extinguish the thirty per cent of her inheritance that we had let her have. Too many eggs seemed to be going into one basket, and her investments, laudable though they might be, could hardly be classed as trustee stocks.

The climax came in February, when she wrote me a long letter from the hospital at Willstown, soon after she had given birth to Noel. She asked

me if I would be one of his godfathers, and of course that pleased me very much, although there was very little prospect that I should live long enough to discharge my duties by him. Wakeling was to be the second godfather, and as he had married Rose Sawyer about six months previously and seemed to be settled in the district I felt that she would not be injuring her child by giving him an elderly godfather who lived on the other side of the world. I made a corresponding alteration to my will immediately, of course.

She went on in the same letter to discuss affairs at Midhurst. "You know, Joe's only manager at present," she wrote. "He's done awfully well; there were about eight thousand head of cattle on the place when he went there, but now there are twelve or thirteen thousand. We shall be selling over two thousand head this year, too many to send down to Julia in one herd, so Joe's got to make two trips. It looks as if there'll be a steady increase for the next few years, because each year in the dry Bill Wakeling builds a couple more dams for us so we get more and more feed each year."

She went on to tell me that Mrs. Spears, the owner, was getting very old, and she wanted to realize a part of the considerable capital that she had locked up in Midhurst; probably she wanted to give it away during her lifetime to avoid death duties. "She asked if we could buy a half share in the station," she said. "She would give us an option to buy the other half at a valuation at the time of her death, whenever that might be. It means finding about thirty thousand pounds; that's about the value of half the stock. The land is rented from the State, of course, and there's seventeen years to go upon the present lease; it means an alteration to the lease to put Joe's name into it jointly with hers."

She told me that they had been to the bank. The bank would advance two-thirds of the thirty thousand pounds. "That leaves us with ten thousand pounds to find in cash," she wrote, "and that's what I wanted to ask you about."

I had to think about that, of course, and talk it over with my partner. But next day, I sat down and drafted a letter to her in reply. "I do not think it is impossible to release a further ten thousand pounds," I wrote, "but I should be very sorry to do so until this matter of the lease had been adjusted to our satisfaction. As the thing stands at the moment, you could lose your home in seventeen years' time and lose with it all the money that you and Mrs. Spears have expended on improvements such as dams and other water conservation schemes, which would pass to the State without any payment whatsoever, so far as my information goes." I learned later that that was incorrect.

I came to the main point of my letter next. "No doubt you have a solicitor that you can trust, but if it would assist you I would very gladly come and visit you in Queensland for a few weeks and see this matter of the lease put into satisfactory order before you invest this money in Midhurst. It is many years since I left England and I have regretted that; I cannot expect to have many more years left in which to travel and to see the world. I would like to take a long holiday and travel a little before I get too feeble, and if I could help you in this matter of the lease I should be only too glad to come and do so." I added, "I need hardly say that I should travel at my own expense."

The answer came in a night letter telegram about ten days later. She urged me to come to them, and suggested that I should come out by air about the end of April, since their winter was approaching then and the weather would be just like an English summer. She said that she was writing with a list of clothes that I should have and medicines and things that I might need upon the journey. I was a little touched by that.

I saw Kennedy, my doctor, at his place in Wimpole Street next day. "Is there any reason why I shouldn't fly out to Queensland?" I asked.

He looked at me quizzically. "It's not exactly what I should advise for you. Must you go to Queensland?"

"I want to go, very much," I said. "For about a month. There's business I should like to see to personally."

"How have you been walking recently?"

There was no point in lying to him. "I walk as far as Trafalgar Square most mornings," I said. "I take a taxi from there."

"You can't quite manage the whole distance to your office?"

"No," I said. "I haven't done that for some time."

"Can you walk upstairs in your club, to the first floor, without stopping?"

I shook my head. "I always go up in the lift. But anyway, there aren't any stairs in Queensland. All the houses are bungalows."

He smiled. "Take off your coat and your shirt, and let me have a look at you." When he had finished his examination, he said, "Well. Are you proposing to go alone?"

I nodded. "I shall be staying with friends at the other end. They'll meet me when I get off the aeroplane."

"And you really feel it's necessary that you should go?"

I met his eyes. "Yes," I said.

"All right," he said. "You know your condition as well as I do. There's nothing new — only the deterioration that you've got to expect." He went on to tell me what I could do and what I mustn't attempt, all the old precautions that he had told me before.

I went back to my office and saw Lester, and told him what I was proposing to do.

"You really feel that it is necessary for you to go personally, yourself?" he asked.

"I do. I'm beginning to think that this thing is the most important business that I ever handled in my life."

I left London one Monday morning and travelled through to Sydney on the same air liner, arriving late on Wednesday night. I stayed two nights in Sydney to rest, and took a little drive around in a hired car during the afternoon. Next day I took the aeroplane to Cairns.

We landed at Cairns in the evening, and here I had a great surprise, because Joe Harman met me at the aerodrome. The Dakota, he told me, now ran twice a week to the Gulf country, and he had come in on the Friday plane to take me out on Monday. "I got one or two little bits of things to order and to see to," he said. "My solicitor, Ben Hope, he's here in Cairns, too. I thought that over the weekend you might like to hear the general set-up of Midhurst, 'n have a talk with him."

I had not heard the slow Queensland speech since he had come to me in Chancery Lane some three years before. He took me in a car to the hotel, a queer, rambling building rather beautifully situated, with a huge bar that seemed to be the focal point. We got there just before tea, the evening meal, and went in almost at once and sat down together. He asked me if I would drink tea or beer or plonk.

"Plonk?" I asked.

"Red wine," he said. "I don't go much for it, myself, but jokers who know about wine say it's all right."

They had a wine list, and I chose a Hunter River wine which I must say I found to be quite palatable. "Jean was very sorry she couldn't come and meet you," he said. "We could have parked Joe with someone, but she's feeding Noel, so that ties her."

"How is she?" I asked.

"She's fine," he said. "Having babies seems to suit her. She's looking prettier than ever."

We settled down after tea on the veranda and started to discuss the business of Midhurst. He had brought with him copies of the accounts for the station for the last three years, neatly typed and very easily intelligible. I commented upon their form, and he said, "I'm not much of a hand at this sort of thing. Jean does most of the accounts for me. I tell her what I want to do out on the station, and she tells me how much money I've got left to spend. She's got the schooling for the two of us."

Nevertheless, I found him quite a shrewd man, very well able to appreciate the somewhat intricate points that came up about the lease and his capital improvements. We talked for a couple of hours that night about his station and about the various businesses that Jean had started in the town.

"She's got twenty-two girls working in the workshop," he said. "Shoes and attaché cases and ladies' bags. That's the one that isn't doing quite so well as the others." He turned the pages of the accounts to show me. "It's making a profit now, but last year there was a loss of over two hundred pounds —two hundred and twenty-seven. But all the others—oh, my word." He showed me the figures for the ice-cream parlour, the beauty parlour, the swimming-pool, the cinema, the laundry and the dress shop. "They're doing fine. The fruit and vegetable shop, that's all right, too." We totted up the figures and found that the seven of them together had made a clear profit of two thousand six hundred and seventy-three pounds in the previous year. "It would pay her to run the workshop at a loss," he said. "She gets it back out of what the girls spend to make themselves look pretty for the ringers, and what the ringers spend in taking out the girls."

I was worried about the workshop. "Can she expand it?" I asked.

He was doubtful about that. "She's using just about all the alligator skins Jeff Pocock and two others can bring in," he said. "I don't think she can get much bigger in the workshop. She doesn't want to, either. She's got a kind of hunch that in a few years' time the workshop won't be necessary at all, that the town will be so big that a workshop employing twenty girls won't be neither here nor there."

"I see," I said thoughtfully. "How big is the town now?"

"There's about four hundred and fifty people living in Willstown," he said. "That's not counting boongs, and not counting people living out upon the stations. The population's trebled in the last three years."

"Is that just because of the workshop?" I asked.

He said slowly: "I think it must be—everything comes back to that, when you look at it. It's not only the workshop, you see. She's got two girls employed in the ice-cream parlour, and one lubra. Two in the beauty parlour, three in the dress shop, two in the fruit shop, three in the cinema."

I was puzzled. "But can twenty girls in the workshop provide work for all these other girls?" I asked.

"It doesn't seem to work that way," he said. "We were totting it up the other day. She's never employed more than about thirty-five girls at any one time, but since she started there's been forty-two girls married out of her businesses. They mostly marry ringers. Well, that's forty-two families starting, forty-two women wanting cinema and beauty parlour and fresh vegetables and that, beside the thirty-five girls that she's still got employed. It kind of snowballs." He paused. "There's something like a hundred girls and married women under twenty-five in Willstown now. When Jean came, there were two.

"And the babies!" he said. "There's more babies than you could shake a stick at. They've had to send a special maternity nurse to the hospital. That's another girl. She got engaged to Phil Duncan, the copper, last month, so there'll be another one."

I smiled. "Are there enough men to go round?"

"Oh, my word," he said. "There's no difficulty in getting men to work in Willstown now. I've had ringers coming from all over Queensland, from the Northern Territory, too, wanting a job round about Willstown."

I went to bed early that night with plenty to think about. We had a conference next morning with Mr. Hope, the solicitor, in his office, and wrote a letter to the Queensland Land Administration Board suggesting a meeting to discuss the lease of Midhurst.

We flew to Willstown on Monday morning, in a Dakota. We landed at places called Georgetown and Croydon on the way and stayed on each aerodrome for about twenty minutes, picking up and setting down passengers and freight. As we circled Georgetown for the landing, I was able to study the place. It was pathetic in a way, for you could see from the air the rectangular pattern of wide streets that once had been busy and lined with houses, now rutted with the rain and grass-grown. A few scattered houses stood at the intersections of what had once been these streets, and they were clustered rather more thickly around the hotel, the only two-storeyed building in either place. Both of these were derelict gold towns.

"I'm kind of glad that you've seen those," said Joe later as we flew on. "Willstown was like that, only a bit worse. It's no great shakes yet, of course, but, my word, it's better than they are."

We circled Willstown as we came in to land. It stood by quite a large river,

THE HUMAN MACHINE

Stick to it

EVERY job has its own problems. And there's no greater mistake than to tackle a job, even the simplest, believing that it's going to be automatically easy.

Many people who think they've failed, have done nothing of the sort. They've merely been beaten. They've not considered the difficulties, and they've thrown the whole thing up without giving themselves a chance to fail.

The way to tackle a job successfully is to stick to it.

by ROFFE THOMPSON

and it was queerly like the other two towns in its layout. There were the same wide streets arranged in rectangular pattern, but the pattern was filling up with houses here. From the air, the glint of the sun upon new corrugated iron roofs was everywhere, so that at one point as we circled opposite the sun I had to shut my eyes against the dazzle. All these houses seemed to be new, and a considerable number were still in the process of building. In the main street, opposite the two-storeyed building that I guessed to be the hotel, a line of shrubs had been planted in a formal garden down the middle of the road, transforming the wide cattle track into two carriage ways, and tarmac pavements had been made in this part of the town. Opposite the hotel I could see the swimming-pool with diving-boards and cabins and a lawn beside it, just as Jean had described it to me in her letters.

She was there to meet me in her Ford utility, her own car that she had bought for running in and out of town to see to her businesses. She was more mature now than I had remembered her; she had grown into a very lovely woman. She said: "Oh Noel, it *is* nice to see you. Are you very tired?"

"I'm not tired," I said. "Three or four years older, perhaps. You're looking very well."

"I am well," she said. "Disgustingly well. Noel, it was good of you to offer to come out like this. I wanted to ask you to, and then it seemed too much to ask. It's such a very long way."

They drove me out immediately to Midhurst. The homestead was very much as I had expected it to be, but there was a garden now in front of it, bright with flowers, and there were great ranges of log stockades or cattle pens that I had not heard about.

"How many hands have you got now?" I asked.

"Eleven white stockriders," he said, "and ten boongs. It's almost easier to get white than black in this part of the country."

They would not let me walk that day, but put me in a long chair in the veranda with a cool drink, and I sat watching all the work of the station as it went on in the yard below. It was fascinating to sit there and watch it all, the white stockriders and the black stockriders, the cattle, the dogs, and the horses, and a half-grown wallaby lolloping about with puppies teasing it by playing with its tail. I could have sat there indefinitely watching it all, and watching the grace of Jean moving round the house attending to her children and her Abo women. I did sit there for three days.

"I always ask Johnnie to help me with the dishes. It gets him out into the fresh air"

She took me into town one morning, and showed me all that she had done. She took me to the workshop first, and she made me put a scarf on before we went in because it would be cold. It was not cold as we would know cold, but it struck chilly after the warm day outside, because she kept the air-conditioner going all the year round. "The girls do love it so," she said. "There's always more of them wanting to work here than I can take on, just because of that." They all looked very smart and pretty in their green smocks, working at the leather goods.

The workshop stood by itself, but she had arranged her other enterprises all in a row as a little street of shops. She had built a wooden veranda over the broad tarmac pavement to shade shop-gazers from the sun or the rain. Here she had the beauty parlour. There were four private little booths, and a glass counter and display case full of women's things; it was all very clean and nice. Next in the row came a little shop with a battery of four Home Laundries, and three young married women sitting gossiping while they waited for their wash. Next was the greengrocer's shop and the dress shop, and then she took me across the road and showed me the cinema and the swimming-pool. It was quite a hot day and by that time I had had about enough, so she took me to the ice-cream parlour and we had a cool drink there. "What comes next?" I asked. "Is there any end to this?"

She laughed, and touched my hand. "No end," she said. "I keep on badgering you for more money don't I? As a matter of fact, I think I can start the next one out of the profits."

"What's that one going to be?"

"A self-service grocer's shop," she replied. "The demand's shifting, Noel. When we started it was entertainment that was needed, because everyone was young and nobody was married then. The solid, sensible things weren't wanted. What they needed then was ice-cream, and the swimming-pool, and the beauty parlour, and the cinema. They'll still need those things, but they won't expand so much more. What the town needs now is things for the young family. A really good grocer's shop selling good, varied food as cheap as we can possibly get it. And then, as soon as I can start it, we must have a household store. Do you know, you can't even buy a baby's pot in Willstown?"

I nodded at the store opposite. "Doesn't Mr. Duncan sell those?"

"He's got no imagination. He only sells big ones, that'll hold the whole baby."

I asked her presently, "How do all your goods get here? They aren't all flown, surely?"

She shook her head. "They come by train from Cairns to Forsayth, and by truck from there. There's no proper road, of course. It makes it terribly expensive, because a truck is worn out in about two years. Bill Wakeling says the Roads Commission are considering a road from here to Mareeba and Cairns—a proper tarmac road. Of course, he wants to build it. He thinks we'll get it inside two years, because the town's growing so fast."

The Land Administration Board answered our letter later on that week and suggested a meeting on the following Tuesday or Wednesday, which suited our air services. I flew down to Brisbane with Joe Harman, picking up his solicitor in Cairns, and we had a conference with the Land Administration Board, which lasted most of one day, settling the Heads of Agreement. Then Harman went back to his station and Mr. Hope and I stayed on in Brisbane passing the draft of the final agreement backwards and forwards to the Land Administration Board with amendments in red and green and blue and purple ink. On top of this, I was in communication with the solicitors for Mrs. Spears over the option agreement for the final purchase of Midhurst; all this kept me busy in Brisbane for nearly a fortnight. Finally I was able to agree to them both, after an exchange of cables with Lester, and brought them back to Cairns. Joe Harman signed them, and we put them in the post.

The business in Queensland done, I went back to Willstown with Joe and stayed another week with them, not because there was any reason why I should do so, but for an old man's sentiment. Jean touched me very much one evening as we sat on the veranda, by suggesting that I stay out there and make my home with them. "You've nothing to go back to England for, Noel," she said. "You're practically retired now. Why not give up London, and stay here with us? We'd love to have you."

It was impossible, of course; the old have their place and the young have theirs. "That's very kind of you," I said. "I wish I could. But I've got sons, and grandchildren, you know. Harry will be coming home next year and we're all hoping that he'll get a shore appointment. He's due for a term of duty at the Admiralty, I think."

She said: "I'm sorry, for our sake. Joe and I talked this over, and we hoped we'd be able to get you to stay with us for a long time. Make your home here with us."

I said quietly: "That was a kind thought, Jean, but I must go back."

They drove me to the aeroplane, of course, to see me off. Leave-takings are stupid things, and best forgotten about as quickly as possible. I cannot even remember what she said, and it is not important, anyway. I can only remember a great thankfulness that the Dakota on that service didn't carry a stewardess so that nobody could see my face as we circled after taking off to get on course, and I saw the new buildings and bright roofs of that Gulf town for the last time.

Now it is winter—and nearly three months since I have been able to get out to the office or the club. My daughter-in-law Eve, Martin's wife, has been organizing me; it was she who insisted that I should engage this nurse to sleep in the flat. They wanted me to go into some sort of nursing home, but I won't do that.

I have spent the winter writing down this story. I suppose because an old man loves to dwell upon the past and this is my own form of the foible. And having finished it, it seems to me that I have been mixed up in things far greater than I realized at the time. It is no small matter to assist in the birth of a new town, and as I sit here looking out into the London mists I sometimes wonder just what it is that Jean has done; if any of us realize, even yet, the importance of her achievement.

I wrote to her the other day and told her a queer thought that came into my head. Her money came originally from the goldfields of Hall's Creek in West Australia, where James Macfadden made it in the last years of the last century. I suppose Hall's Creek is derelict now, and like another Georgetown or another Croydon. I think it is fitting that the gold that has been taken from those places should come back to them again in capital to make them prosperous. When I thought of that, it seemed to me that I had done the right thing with her money and that James Macfadden would have approved, although I had run contrary to the strict intentions of his son's will.

I suppose it is because I have lived rather a restricted life myself that I have found so much enjoyment in remembering what I have learned in these last years about brave people and strange scenes. I have sat here day after day this winter, sleeping a good deal in my chair, hardly knowing if I was in London or the Gulf country, dreaming of the blazing sunshine, of poddy dodging and black stockriders, of Cairns and of Green Island. Of a girl that I met forty years too late, and of her life in that small town that I shall never see again, that holds so much of my affection. THE END

"A Town Like Alice," by Nevil Shute, the Book Society Choice for June, is published in book form by William Heinemann, price 10s. 6d.

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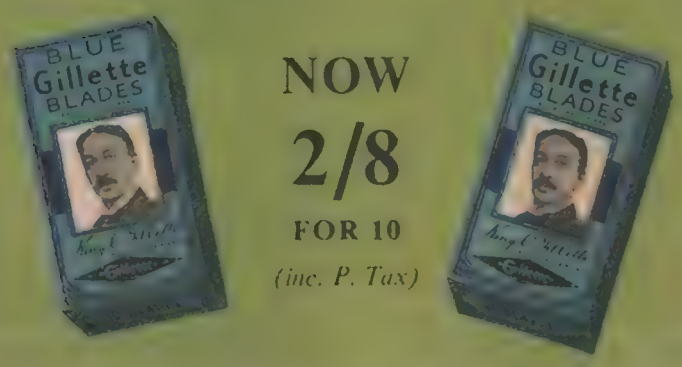

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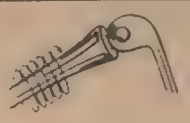

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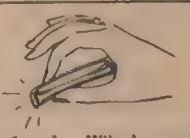

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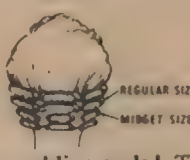

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"Just the way I've always dreamed of it." Through the serving hatch, Mrs. Swanson keeps an eye on mealtime in her Blackpool boarding-house

Seaside landlady

by W. G. GREATOREX

The aspidistra and the red plush have been thrown out. Now it's bright rooms, brisk service, good food. Still she wonders: will they like it?

A FEW DAYS AGO, Mrs. Gloria Swanson answered a ring at the door of her eighteen-bedroomed boarding-house just off the North Promenade at Blackpool and found one of her wartime R.A.F. billetees standing there with his wife. He grinned. "You haven't changed a bit, Ma!" Then he stepped inside and whistled. "My, but the old billet's different!" So Mrs. Swanson, houseproud as a newlywed even after eighteen years as a seaside landlady, took her callers over the house.

The rooms brought back memories for the ex-Erk, one of nearly 2,000 who lived at "Ma's" place from 1940 until the war moved away from the Blackpool front. They hold memories for Mrs. Swanson, too; not only of the weather-tanned young faces that smirked impertinently into her kitchen, of sergeant's inspections, of boys gone sick with vaccination fever, but of the struggles to make Seabright the snug, smartly furnished place she always dreamed of owning.

First, it was a question of money; then came the war, with its airmen and evacuees and its aftermath of legal and financial obstacles. "Now," says Mrs. Swanson, surveying the cream-painted walls, the cosy furniture, "I've got it just as I want it—for the first time."

Her achievement says more for the rewards of boarding-house keeping and for the fairness of billeting compensation than landladies, Mrs. Swanson included, are ready to admit. From front door to topmost bedroom, Seabright is airy, fresh with new paint, comfortable with carpet and as spotlessly hygienic as a hospital. And Mrs. Swanson, trim in her white smock, puts her hands firmly on her hips and says: "I think they'll like it, don't you, luv?"

"They" are the guests. Among them are a lord mayor, a headmistress, a grammar school master, a blast-furnaceman, and a trade union official who first went to Seabright when there was a delegate conference in Blackpool. There are retired folk who prefer to holiday when things are quieter, and millworkers down for "a bit o' Blackpool air" in Wakes Weeks. Inevitably, there are the ex-R.A.F. types, married now and many of them fathers of families.

Everything Has Changed

Mrs. Swanson takes off her horn-rimmed spectacles. "The old aspidistra days are gone, thank goodness. They went with the plush-topped tablecloths and the slavery of apartment house keeping. Folks want better things today—and so they should. Why, even in my time"—she is a grey-haired forty-nine—"even in the past twelve years I've seen unbelievable changes."

Before she went to Seabright, Mrs. Swanson ran a nine-bedroomed house near bustling Lord Street for six years. In those days, visitors bought their food from nearby shops, meal by meal, for her to cook. One of her nightmare memories is of all those raw meals lined up nauseatingly on the kitchen table, skewered with paper tags showing room numbers: bacon and eggs, room 4; onion and piece of liver, room 7; lump of fish, room 3; and so on.

Mrs. Swanson says she boarded a couple, and cooked for them, for twenty-eight shillings a week. One woman came with a family of five, and promptly unloaded a travelling trunk of tinned foods: pears, salmon, potted meat. "It was only in the 'posh' places where there was full board," Mrs. Swanson recalls. "Nowadays people expect comfort. They look for good, well-served food, cleanliness and punctuality."

Mrs. Swanson has an inland background: she lived in Sheffield until her husband, an engineer, lost his job during the slump of the early thirties. They went to Blackpool and followed up boarding-house advertisements for weeks, buying only after seeing about sixty properties. What they paid was nothing like today's prices: £5,000 to £15,000, with an average of £9,000 for the standard twelve- or fourteen-bedroomed house, with goodwill and contents.

In 1938 they moved to Seabright. Their earnings, says Mrs. Swanson, have been ploughed back year after year; the majority of Blackpool landladies are satisfied if they have a surplus of over £300 to see them through the winter. Food is easily the heaviest expense, and in a typical twelve-bedroomed house runs to £500 for the season. This is the way an average landlady's money goes against an income of £1,500:

	£
Maid's wages	65
National Insurance ...	35
Painting and decorating	50
Renewals	120
Gas, electricity, fuel, rates	90
Advertising, postage, phone	60
Printing, stationery ...	20
Rent or mortgage ...	150
Laundry, window cleaning	35
Insurance	10
Flowers, newspapers, etc.	15

With food, this totals £1,150, leaving £350 for wages for husband and wife. Says Mrs. Swanson: "You can't make big profits and give your visitors a square deal."

Mrs. Swanson's rates are fifteen shillings for a double bedroom, sixteen shillings for a room with twin beds, and seventeen and six for a single room—a fair representation of Blackpool prices, which range from twelve and six to a pound a night. Bookings are down this year, but Mrs. Swanson sees this as a challenge

to the town's 6,000 landladies to go for higher standards to compete with foreign travel and holiday camps.

She is now welcoming new visitors every Saturday, thirty-two at a time. Having got used to human nature, she doesn't take long getting to know them, and overcoming those "terrible crunching moments at mealtimes when everybody is weighing up the rest." Before placing guests at tables she sorts them out in her mind: the introverts and extroverts, the shy and assertive, the serious and those who live on the verge of laughter. An over-simplified division, but effective, she says.

There are sensibilities to consider, like those of the honeymoon couples, whom Mrs. Swanson claims she can identify right away. One morning she asked the maid to vacuum the room occupied by a young couple who had arrived the night before. "There'll be a lot of confetti."

But the maid said Mrs. Swanson was wrong. At the end of the week, however, as the couple were leaving, the young man came to Mrs. Swanson and said: "I'll let you into a secret. We were married only an hour or two before we got here."

"I know," she replied.

The bridegroom was staggered. "And there she had me on my hands and knees picking up every blinkin' piece of confetti!"

Eight out of every ten honeymoon couples, Mrs. Swanson discovers, say nothing until they are about to leave; the ninth announces it to all on the first day, and the tenth confides only in her.

Her Kitchen Is A Dream

During the season, Mrs. Swanson rises at six fifteen every morning and usually works through until midnight. She does the cooking, but her daughter and two helps share the rest of the housework; and her husband is a handyman, ready for anything from pan-scrubbing to painting. Like so many mid-twentieth century Blackpool boarding-houses, Seabright runs to a dream kitchen with refrigerator, chip-pan, hotplate and bread machine; capital assets landladies are apt to overlook when talking about their financial return.

Mrs. Swanson does not worry about the tales of landladies' meanness. "In a few cases I suppose there's some truth in them," she admits. It is odds-on that, visiting the theatre with her visitors this summer, she will hear the old gag about the landlady sitting in her front room wearing her overcoat. She will probably laugh, and go home for a last check over the house, a glance at the visitors "In-Out" board, a survey of the kitchen for a quick-start breakfast.

Over her last cup of tea she will plan the next twenty-four hours, and on her planning will largely depend the happiness of over thirty folk trying to get away from the humdrum of reality. Being a landlady has its responsibilities as well as its benefits. It has given Mrs. Swanson a home by the sea, but it has also taught her more about people than she thought there was to learn. Holidaymakers, airmen, and the eight American officers who were billeted at Seabright towards the end of the war, have all made life fascinating.

Mrs. Swanson has a knack of getting on with them. The Americans must have talked about this when they got home, for she has been offered a job in the U.S.—as a hostess. "A nice, fancy name," she says. "But I just want to stay an English landlady. It's an important job. Don't you think so, luv?" THE END

THE BEAR PIT

Continued from page 10

straight. He put the fiddle down and tightened the hair of the bow—he seemed to know what he was up to.

One of the little girls picked up the fiddle and belted her friend across the head with it, but the stout instrument somehow stood the strain. Monk snatched the fiddle back and laid it on the pavement; then, methodically, he clumped the little girl across the ear.

"You just touch that again, Cissie Preston . . . you just touch it, see, and I'll spifficate you!"

"You couldn't spifficate your granny!"

But it was an empty taunt; Monk chose not to hear. He handed me the fiddle and the bow and said: "Play, Maestro!"

"I haven't learned much yet," I said.

"You play," he said, "or I'll bash the living daylights out of you."

I played. I played "Fairy Fingers," I played "Goodbye to the Glen," I played "A Little Waltz." Monk stood with the long arms that gave him his nickname folded across his chest and a disgusted leer on his face. I stopped playing. My repertoire was at an end.

"Go on," Monk said, "or I'll do you proper."

"I don't know any more," I said, "except the Twelve Finger exercises."

"Play them," Monk told me.

So I played. Badly, and making very many mistakes. When I had finished he took the fiddle from me and reached out a hand for the bow.

"Look," he said, "I'll show you how to play it, see?" And, standing there in his incredibly ragged jersey, he played my fiddle. And no "Fairy Fingers," either.

Monk played "Tiger Rag," "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Romantic Gipsy Moon" and "Nelly Dean." Played them entirely by ear, with many effects, many shakes and trills.

"My dad learned me," he said. "My dad's Scotch." As if that explained it.

I DIDN'T go on to my music lesson, I went home and told my parents. I was much impressed with Monk's performance, and made it the basis of my argument. If Monk could play all those proper tunes without knowing a note of music, and I, with all the paraphernalia of notes and scales, could only play a lot of dopey kid's tunes, surely my time was being wasted?

"You'll go on with your violin," said my mum, who was ironing at the time.

"But every time I go by there I'll get bashed."

"Go the other way," advised my mother, "round Baku Gardens and down Khartoum Road. No need to go anywhere near Casbah Street."

I tried to explain that I could not avoid Casbah Street. In fact I was attracted by the gang, attracted by the feeling of danger and adventure in running the blockade. I wouldn't have missed Casbah Street for worlds, even if I was terrified when at last I got there. My sister's suggestion was better. She was doing her homework and she said: "I'll come with you Saturday and fix them. You watch, Ernie, I'll knock the little beasts silly."

"But I want to give up the fiddle," I protested.

"You're going on with your fiddle," my mother repeated. There was no appeal.

On Saturday I walked down Casbah Street to be immediately surrounded by the gang.

"Go on," said Cissie Preston, "let Monk play a chune." It was not an invitation, it was a direct threat. But their attentions were distracted for a moment and my sister descended on them, gym slip swinging like the kilts of a regiment of Highlanders as she charged among them.

The action ended with my sister sitting firmly on Monk's chest and rubbing sand in his eyes.

"Do you give up? Come on, you foul pig, give up!"

"I give up," said the redoubtable Monk, squirming with pain. My sister poured the rest of the sand triumphantly in his mouth, got up and let Monk struggle, spitting, into a sitting position.

"I'll tell my big brother of you," Monk yelled. "You won't get away with this."

"See! You don't like it, you bullying worm! You touch my brother again and I'll skin you. Touch him just once and I'll paste you. I'll pulverize you. I'll murder you."

Monk thought it over. "Tell you what," he said, "suppose he joins the gang. Then this'd be his district, see, and we wouldn't have to bash him."

"Oh, yes," I said eagerly, "let me join the gang."

"Do you want to?" My sister eyed me speculatively.

"Oh, yes, if Monk'll let me. Here, Monk, play the fiddle and let Sis hear."

There was peace between us. Monk played "Road to the Isles" while his cronies squealed out bagpipe imitation; I missed another music lesson, and it was arranged that next day, Sunday, I was to be in Casbah Street early for initiation into the gang.

Dutifully I was there at nine-thirty, and the first of them arrived at ten o'clock. It was strange to see the street without them; I could never have imagined there was a time when they were not screaming and hurtling from end to end, playing cricket against the jam-factory wall or football down by the gas-works gate.

That Sunday morning we sat against a wall and chatted, peacefully, waiting for Monk. Mostly we boasted.

"My dad's got a bike with chromium handlebars."

"My dad's got his own barrer."

"My dad wears the biggest shoes of anybody."

"My dad's been in jail."

"My dad bashed a copper and got done."

"My dad's got a whole train, all his own."

"My dad's got three racing cars."

Wilder and wilder the boasts came, until Monk turned up and told us: "You silly clots, you could have been busy at something. Got any money?"

"I've got sixpence," I said in an unguarded moment.

Every eye swivelled on me.

"Penny each, all round," said Cissie, who was to become my first love—but that was much later.

"Listen," Monk said, "when I want you to open your trap I'll tell you. We're going to the Zoo. We need the sixpence."

"But we can't all get in the Zoo for sixpence—we can't even get there for sixpence," I said.

"Dope," said Monk sadly, "we don't pay. We need the sixpence to buy peanuts."

I thought that over. "Can I get initiated before we go?" I asked.

"Look," he said, "you got to do something daring and terrible to get initiated. There ain't nothing daring to do 'ere. That's why we're going to the Zoo. Come on."

So we went to the Zoo, and a terrible and wonderful experience it was. We rode on the backs of lorries, we jumped on buses and rode until the irate conductors threw us off, we begged for pennies and got a lift on a firewood float driven by a Cockney in a peaked cap and drawn by a beribboned pony.

Getting into the Zoo involved weighting a rope (which Monk kept lashed round his waist) and catching it in the top of the fence, then climbing over.

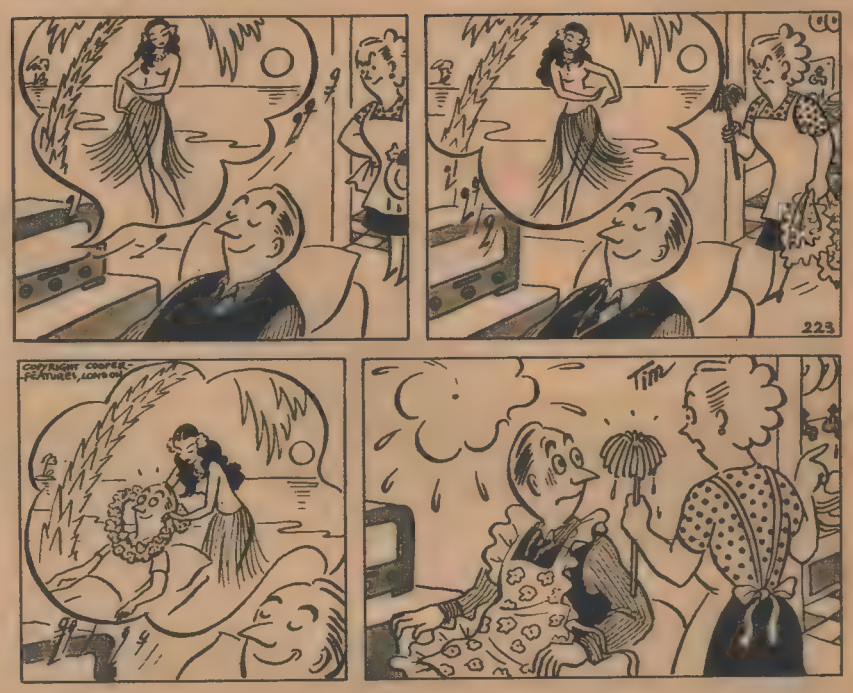
"You go first," said Monk.

"Is this the initiation?"

"No, stupid. This is 'cause you joined last."

The afternoon was spent feeding the animals, yodelling, being chased by keepers, and wandering endlessly round among the pits and cages. I was scared they'd make me go and stroke a lion, or something of the

OH, JOHNNY! *by TIM*



sort for the initiation, but I think Monk had forgotten all about it.

At last the Zoo emptied and the sun began to go down and we were more or less alone with the animals—the gang never acknowledged things like closing time. They usually got out the same way as they came in. We wandered round, still on the watch for keepers, until we reached the bear pit, where a shaggy brown bear was slouching up and down exercising himself, his mate lying flat on her back and coughing (or laughing; it sounded as if she was laughing at him—I think we interrupted a domestic squabble of some sort).

Then, looking down below us I saw a woman's handbag lying there at the very bottom of the pit. "Look," I said, "a woman's handbag. I'll bet there's money in that!" One glance at Monk's face told me I should have kept my mouth shut.

"Oi, oi," he said, "initiation. Down you go, Maestro, and whiffle up wiv it."

"Me?" I said, "in there? Cor, I'd be eaten alive."

"Good job, too," said Monk, "but he won't hurt you. They're proper tame, them bears."

I could imagine the scene vividly—me being eaten while the gang stood on top and screamed with laughter. "Not me," I said, "I'm not going."

"You want to be in the gang, don't yer?"

"Not that much," I said.

"O.K.," Monk said nonchalantly, "if you won't go down, we'll just have to fling yer in, that's all. We can't have no cowards in the gang."

"I'm not going," I said, "and that's flat!" This being one of my mother's favourite expressions.

Monk was nothing if not reasonable. He said: "Look, I tell you what I'll do. I'll tie my rope round yer waist, see? So if the bears come near we can pull yer up."

"Suppose the keepers come?" I said. "You run off, I suppose, and leave me in with the bears."

Monk produced his big jack-knife, his pride and joy. "Take this. If the old bear goes for you, stab him in the gizzard."

But it was not until the whole gang converged on me and I was half-way over the railings that I consented to the rope and the jack-knife. With the rope firm round my waist (so firm it nearly cut me in half), I was lowered into the pit.

The bear raised his head and glared at me with the expression of an old gentleman who has been disturbed in his after-dinner nap, then turned and walked away from me. I scampered after him until I came to the place where the bag lay, and picked it up. I opened the bag. Cor! A wallet full of notes! And a purse. And an address book. A fountain pen, all sorts of things.

Somebody was standing behind me and I turned to say: "There isn't half some stuff in here!" But the words froze. He was very big, much bigger than he looked from the top of the pit, and he hadn't been reading the tooth-paste advertisements. All over he smelt like an old sofa, dusty and unused. He put out his great shaggy head and sniffed me with his pin-cushion nose.

I had once read that the best thing to do if confronted with a wild animal was not to move a muscle. That wasn't the reason I didn't move. Had my life depended on it I could not have moved. I was petrified. The bear sniffed carefully all over me, making growling noises at the back of his throat. His partner heaved to her feet and shambled over to see what hubby had caught.

Then the rope tightened with a sickening clasp round my middle, I shot into the air, jerked upside down, bumped against the stone wall of the pit and slid down three feet. The bear was startled and backed away.

Another jerk, and I was on the move upwards again, all sorts of luckily useless objects falling into the pit. Two more jerks and I was over the railing, the whole gang heaving on the rope.

"Give me the bag," said Monk, as I lay gasping over the rail in the attitude of a passenger in a storm at sea. Below, both the bears regarded me with mildly interested eyes.

MONK had the notecase from the bag in his hands, Cissie was combing her hair with the neat little comb, the other ghastly girl painting her face with the compact.

"Cor," said Monk, "notes! Real money! We won't 'alf 'ave a good time with this."

Hardly knowing what I was doing I snatched the notecase. "Listen," I told him, "there's lots of money here. If we spend it, we're dead in trouble. Our people'll want to know where we got the stuff."

"Tell 'em some old geezer give it us," Monk suggested blandly.

"Think they'd believe that, you dope?"

"Who," asked Monk dangerously, "are you calling a dope?"

Realizing for the first time that I was bigger, heavier and longer in the reach (and that I had actually been in the pit with the bears), I dotted him on the nose. Before he could get over his sheer astonishment, I popped him another inexpertly on the eye, then drove him against the railings and lambasted him until he cried for mercy.

"We can't take this money," I said, "or we'll get in trouble." I picked up the bag, but in putting the things back I found the purse had a lot of silver in it, and dished out the silver, fair shares all round. Later, we made ourselves sick on fish-and-chips and went to the pictures.

I got home at midnight, got a terrific wigging from my father and refused to go to any more violin lessons again. Next day I gave the fiddle to Monk. And from that day onwards whatever other of the manly virtues I may have lacked, self-confidence was not among them.

Oh, yes, I remember we each got three and tenpence from the purse. Monk, in a rage at losing the leadership of the gang, flung the bag back in the pit, but it wasn't there next time we went to the Zoo. THE END

WRITE TO JOHN BULL ABOUT IT

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Continued from next column

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Continued in previous column

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2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.
3. As entry-fee, enclose P.O. or stamps as indicated on coupon. Fee submitted will be taken to cover *Bullets* in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are allowed. If using P.O. make payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated. Forces half-rate for *Bullets* and Crosswords for entry-fees not exceeding 2s. if coupons personally completed and Service rank indicated.
4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests in *Bulletin* and *Gazette* dated Aug. 19, and in JOHN BULL, dated Aug. 26, also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

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Dame Nature
Russia Or No Russia
How To Manage
Every Time
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..... In Korea
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The Coming .....
Knocked .....Cold
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HOW TO WIN. First complete Square in INK, giving your Answers to Clues below. Then, if you wish to enter *one* extra Answer to any *one*, *two* or *three* Clues, give each such word in full in "Extra Answer" Form below Crossword Square.

Across Clues XWORD 694

1. Certain kind is worth equal weight in gold
6. Many a man has to keep watch on his
10. Can play havoc with seedlings, if gardener isn't careful
11. Antique dealer has his own particular these
14. May well come in very handy, some day
15. Shafts of this may sink deep

Down Clues

2. Some people resort to this without adequate reason
3. May go down well—and without a hitch
4. Can easily be a good one even if with only one hand
5. The same this should not be expected from the old folk
7. Applicant for job may perhaps be this by new boss
8. As a rule royalty comes by way of
9. They should be placed with a nice taste
12. Any doubts or misgivings are sometimes swept on one side by
13. An impatient person isn't likely to

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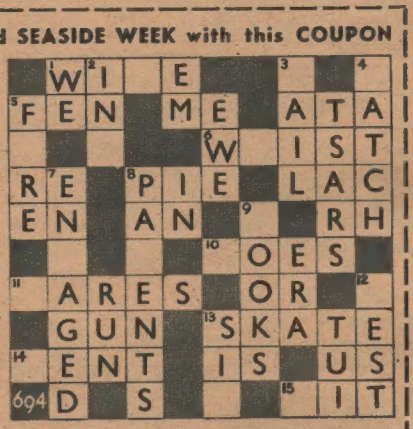

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SILENCE FOR MRS. HAWKES

Continued from page 13

did it appear that anything unusual was afoot. Kitty served deftly and Mrs. Hawkes chattered unconcernedly with the regulars. The ring of the cash register, the thud of darts, the clinking of glasses—all the familiar noises spoke of a permanence which nothing could disturb.

Only the striking of the church clock, faintly heard across the fields, reminded Eva Hawkes of the inexorable passing of the hours, but did nothing to change her resolution. She was inflexible. She wanted nothing to be out of the ordinary on her last night. Once or twice she glanced at the large, framed photograph of Tom in his flying kit, surveying the scene from his place above the mantelpiece. He seemed to smile down at her tenderly, as if he were welcoming her.

WITH only half an hour to go before closing time, her resolution wavered. Through the smoky atmosphere the flickering light seemed to reflect on the glass of Tom's portrait, changing the expression, and on an impulse she called out: "Give your orders, please, gentlemen. Same again for everyone, Kitty, I expect. Drinks all round on the house, Ned. Tell them to fill up; it's on the house, this round. Give your orders, please."

"What's come over the old girl?" they asked Ned as the pints of beer slopped over the bar in the public.

Eva Hawkes helped herself to a double whisky and then she realized that a hush had fallen on the place: people were expecting her to say something. She turned round, feeling foolish. What on earth had prompted her to do such a thing? She turned and faced them, noticing that even Kitty had a glass of gin. Into that hushed group of expectant drinkers somebody hurled an encouraging noise. People started clapping. A voice shouted: "Silence for Mrs. Hawkes," and quiet fell upon both bars again.

She realized she had to speak, to break the tension. She looked towards the portrait over the mantelpiece. Tom seemed to smile softly at her.

"To Tom!" she cried. "Please drink to Tom! That's him over the fireplace. To Tom!"

"To Tom!" They exclaimed dutifully, turning incurious eyes towards the large frame. "To Tom!" And the tension eased, conversation began again and the hubbub became general. To hide her embarrassment, Eva Hawkes spoke swiftly to Kitty, chiding her sharply for some little fault, and Kitty, realizing that something out of the ordinary had taken place, showed no resentment. It seemed only a few minutes before Ned was bustling round shouting: "Time, gentlemen, *please*! Come along now. Time, gentlemen, *PLEASE*!"

When the last customer had gone and the place had been put to rights, Eva Hawkes wandered round the bar again, fingering the worn oak and the glasses with curious fingers. This had been her home for forty-three years. Every corner, every knot-hole was as known to her as her own body, yet all took on a quality of strangeness. The King Alfred was no longer part of her. She had left it already; only her body remained within its walls.

"Good night, Mrs. Hawkes," said Ned, looking at her with interest.

"Good night," she answered mechanically, her tongue without her guidance producing the exact tones

and habitual inflexion of all the previous nights.

"Good night, Mrs. Hawkes," said Kitty, and stood hesitating. "Good night. Is there——?"

"Yes, Kitty?" said Eva Hawkes's shell, smiling, empty.

"Is there anything I can do?"

"No, Kitty, no. It has all been done. Good night, Kitty, and—and thank you."

Locking up and turning out the lights, Eva Hawkes made her way upstairs, putting the takings, according to habit, in the old-fashioned safe in her bedroom. An hour to go. Should she, she wondered, undress and meet Tom from the old brass bedstead they had once shared? Or ought she to be standing up when she swallowed the contents of the bottle? To crash ignominously to the ground and be discovered, perhaps, bruised and with her clothing disarranged was no part of her plan.

She undressed and got into bed and, placing the bottle beside her, set herself to discover, if she could, in the last hour, something of the place in which she and Tom would be reunited, from the Bible that, though rarely opened, lay always on the table by her bed. And presently, as she read, she became conscious of the stuttering engines of a plane.

That in itself would have done nothing to rouse her body from the trance-like condition in which it found itself. The King Alfred was about two miles from the town, standing at a crossroads. Aircraft often flew low over it, seeking their bearings. It was years since she had felt even a slight constriction of her throat at the sound. She would have turned again to her Bible, when something in the sound disturbed her. The engines roared only intermittently.

SEIZED with an overwhelming sense of urgency, she climbed out of bed and ran to the window. Framed in the leaded casement she could see the plane, flames already streaming from the fuselage, heading, it seemed, directly towards her.

She was in no doubt what to do. She grabbed a wrap and made her way downstairs and to the telephone. As she spoke she heard the plane crash and, slamming the receiver down, she ran outside.

In the field opposite, the plane was burning fiercely. Even before she had opened the gate she could feel the heat. She could see figures moving frantically but ineffectually inside.

In her hand was an axe which she had wrenched from its place beside the door, and with it, the flames searing her clothes and her hair, she beat upon the twisted framework where she supposed the door to be. She forced an entrance in a matter of moments and, braving the fire, she entered the inferno and calmly began the task of removing the broken and unconscious bodies.

Again and again she staggered out, with a man or a woman, and once a child, across her shoulders to lay on the cool, damp grass. If only someone had done this for Tom . . . it flashed into her mind that this was why she still lived, that she had been kept alive all these years since Tom had gone just for this moment. And in these bright flames she would find release, an honourable discharge. She thought with shame of the bottle upstairs and taking a deeper breath she turned back once more.

As she reached the plane an enormous sheet of flame engulfed her in an explosion so loud that it seemed to remove all noise from the world for a little while.

THE END

No! say the Old-Fashioned Few

IS WASHDAY EASIER SINCE THE WAR?

Yes! say the Modern Millions

WASHING EASIER NOWADAYS? I SHOULD SAY NOT! IF YOU WANT TO GET YOUR CLOTHES CLEAN, YOU'VE STILL GOT TO RUB AND SCRUB. IT TAKES TIME AND HARD WORK, BUT THERE'S NO GETTING ROUND IT.
OF COURSE WASHDAY IS EASIER NOW! WHY, BEFORE THE WAR EVERY WASHING POWDER YOU COULD BUY FORMED HORRID SCUM. HALF YOUR TIME WAS SPENT RUBBING AND WRINGING THAT STICKY, DIRT-LADEN SCUM INTO YOUR CLOTHES. BUT WISK FORMS NO SCUM AT ALL. THE DIRT SIMPLY FALLS OUT OF THE CLOTHES!

Now you can be rid of that back-breaking drudgery every Monday!

BY WASHING EXPERT MARY CLARKE

I FIND it hard to understand, but there *are* women who still dread washday as the worst day of the week. These poor women spend hours over the tub, rubbing and scrubbing till their backs feel like breaking. They think that there's no other way to get the clothes really clean.

But I'm glad to say there's the other side of the picture—the women who say "Yes" when asked if washday is easier now than before the war. They are the ones who know how.

These up-and-coming housewives have proved for themselves that Lever Brothers' wonderful Wisk *revolutionizes* washday because it gets the dirt out so easily.

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You see, old-fashioned washing methods form scum in the water. This scum catches up the dirt and *clings* to the clothes.

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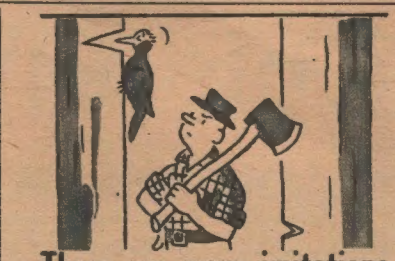

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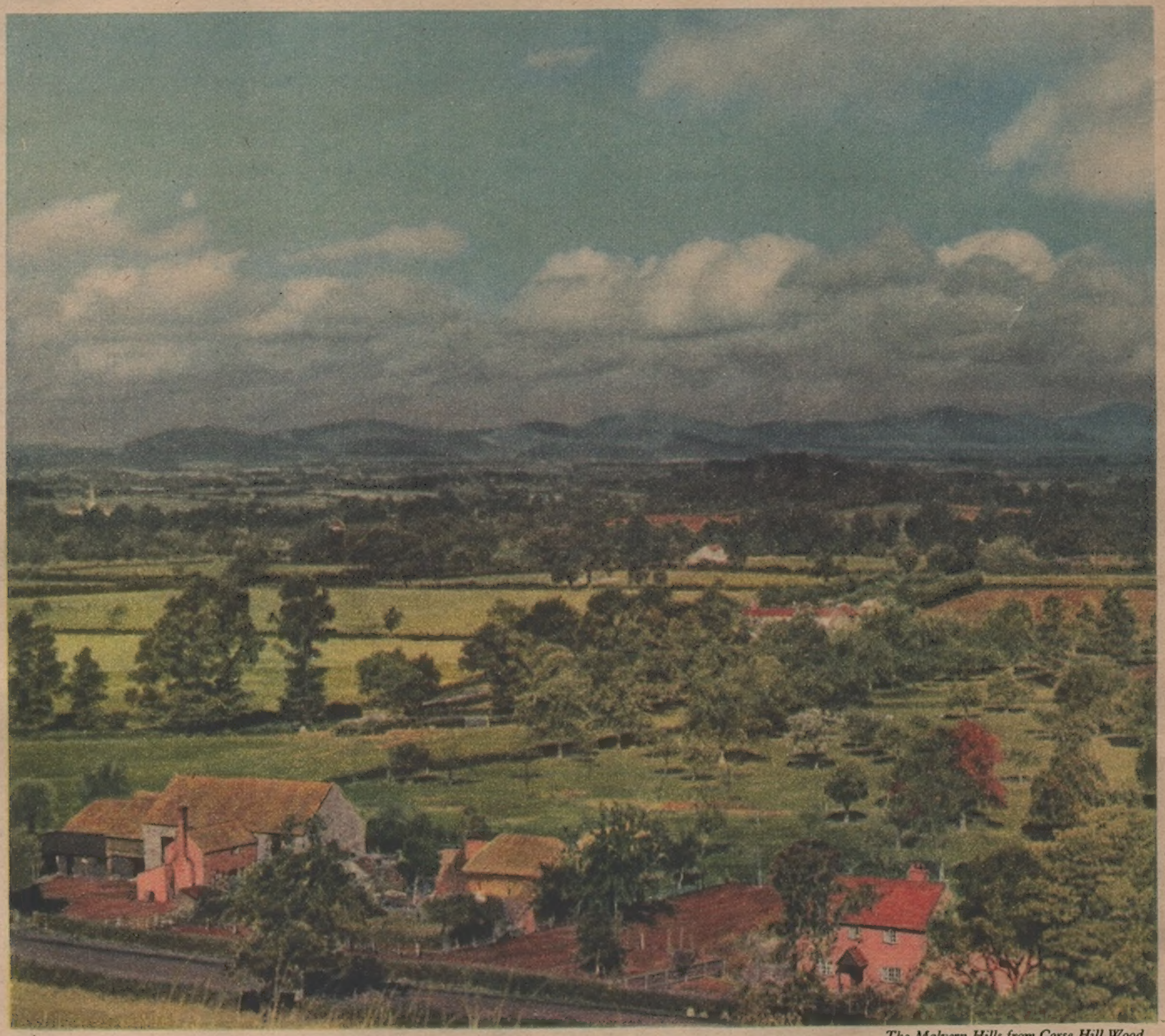
This England . . .



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"IN a somer season when soft was the sonne . . . Ac on a May morwenyng on Malverne Hilles . . ." So begins our first great English poem, the Vision of Piers Plowman. And who can wonder that great poetry shaped itself in Langland's head as he wandered these hills near six hundred years ago? The poem is a pure specimen of English before the grammar writers had their say. Pure English, too, is Langland's love of good ale. Again and again does he contemn "mene ale" or "feble ale to drynke" and sing the praises of "the beste ale, a galon for a grote — no lesse." And as he loved his England and his "hilles" so would he have rejoiced in Bass or Worthington, those direct descendants of the best old English ale.

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